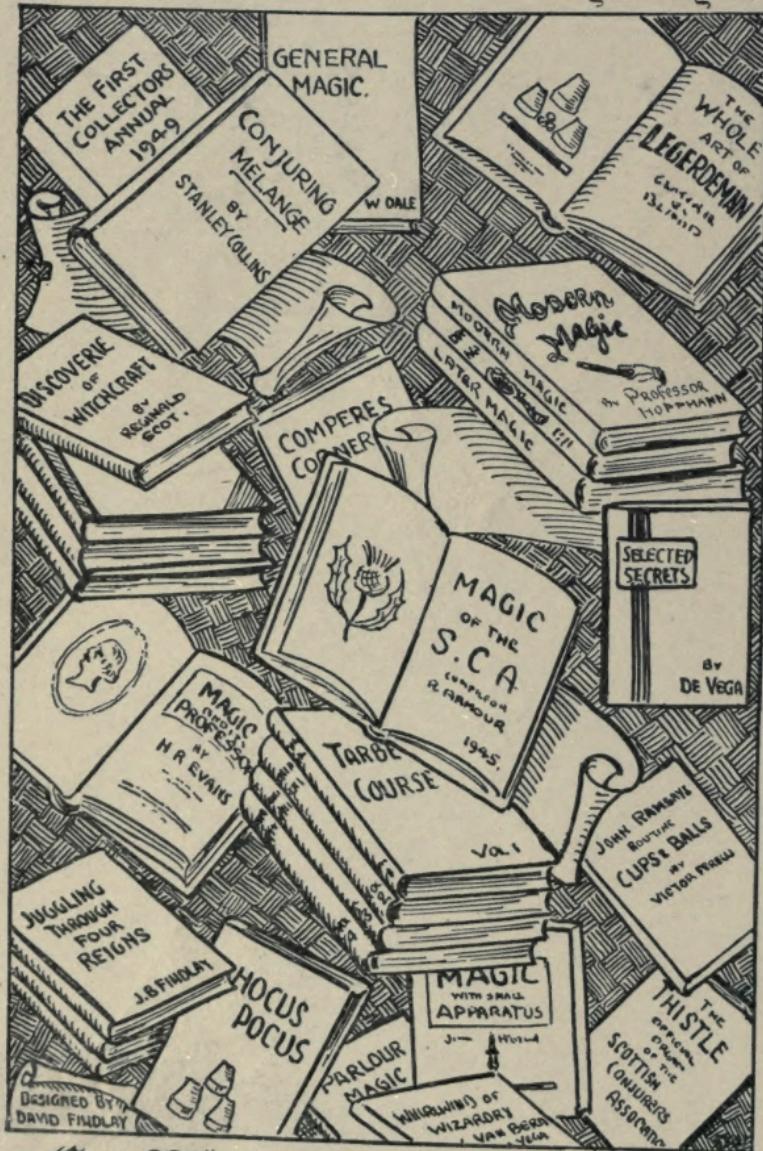


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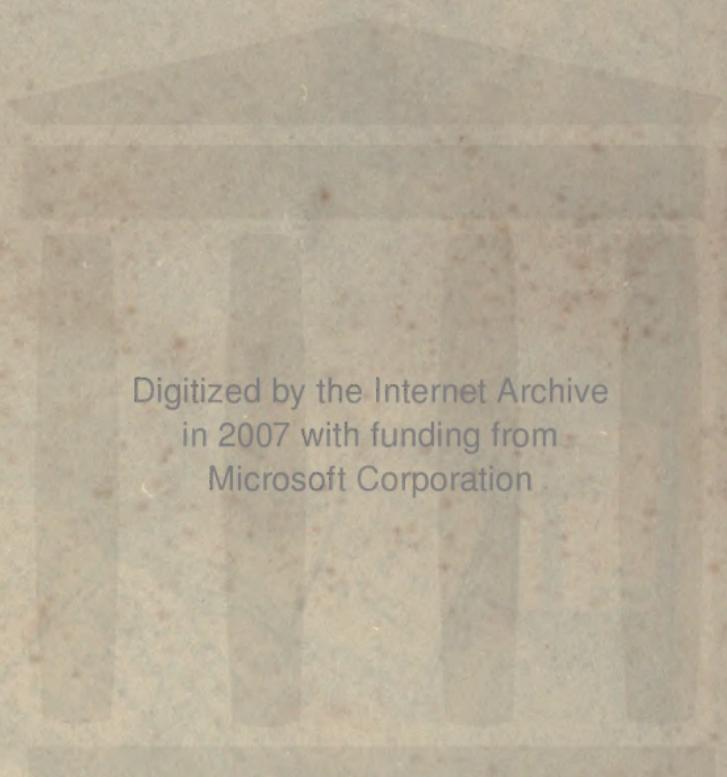
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ARCHIBALD HADDON

GREEN ROOM GOSSIP

BY

ARCHIBALD HADDON

With a Foreword by R.D.B.

LONDON

STANLEY PAUL & CO.

31 ESSEX STREET, STRAND, W.C. 2.



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2037
H22
1922

To

MY WIFE, JOHANNA,

AND MY CHILDREN,

MARJORIE, JACK, NINA AND BETTY

—PLAYGOERS ALL.

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PREFATORY NOTES

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

THE writer and publisher are greatly indebted to the proprietors of the *Daily Express* and *Sunday Express* for permission to reproduce from the columns of those newspapers the material of which this volume is mainly composed. They are also indebted to MR. HAL HURST, R.I., for his tasteful wrapper design.

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Dates and places of production of plays mentioned in the book are given in the index.

FOREWORD

By the Editor of the *Daily Express*.

THE author of "Green Room Gossip" has contributed dramatic criticism to the *Daily Express* for exactly twenty years without a break.

That is a record which may safely be left to speak for itself.

It suggests that the book will achieve a success which its author, by his earnestness and industry, has thoroughly deserved.

R. D. BLUMENFELD.

London, January 31, 1922.

DRAMA'S VACANT THRONE.

“There were giants in those days.”

CHAPTER I

DRAMA'S VACANT THRONE

[Quintus Roscius was strictly a comedian, but he attained such perfection in his art that to be a "Roscius" became synonymous with pre-eminence in every profession.]

HENRY IRVING, the last great English actor, has been dead these seventeen years. His throne is still vacant. There is no one—and there has been none—worthy to wear his mantle.

Where is the new Roscius whose coming will herald the Renaissance of English acting? Is he in the ranks of our armies, with a Shakespeare in his knapsack? Is he, like Edmund Kean, a poor strolling player with leaking boots, unknown and despised, as on the night when Kean slunk into Drury Lane and stormed the town with Shylock?

Vainly one scans the records of contemporary actors for a sign of Irving's successor. There is none among them who could say with Kean, "The pit rose at me!"

The pit has had no opportunity for years to "rise" at any actor. Acting has shed its grandeur. It is no longer majestic or sublime.

The masterpieces of the British Drama are produced so rarely that the valuable traditions of the theatre have almost ceased to be handed on from one executant to another. When, for example, "Love's Labour's Lost" was revived at the Old Vic, the players were almost, if not entirely, bereft of first-hand knowledge concerning the traditional portrayal of the characters.

Tradition, certainly, is not an infallible guide in modern conditions. Nevertheless, great acting may become a lost art without it, like the stained-glass process of the ancients.

Glance at the contemporary stage—or the stage of the whole post-Irving period—and try to visualise a single piece of acting which has driven an audience frantic with enthusiasm. In the old Lyceum days the gallery would cheer for ten minutes at a stretch at the end of a tremendous scene. I have seen people standing on the seats in the stalls and waving their handkerchiefs, hats, and programmes at Henry Irving.

The pit has forgotten how to "rise." Why? Because the art of classic acting is almost *in extremis*.

Think of the histrionic triumphs of the later Victorian era, and compare them with the emasculated displays of the moment.

Bernhardt (whose art is cosmopolitan) rightly belongs to that period. Think of the blood-curdling thrill of her tigress spring in "La Tosca." Think of Wyndham's Garrick, of Warner's Coupeau, of Forbes-Robertson's Buckingham and Hamlet, of Genevieve Ward's Queen Margaret, of Shiel Barry's Gaspard, of Barry Sullivan's Virginius. Even Wilson Barrett, the "popular" tragedian, moved his audiences to demonstrations of delirious admiration undreamed of in the theatre to-day.

The point is too obvious to be laboured. The British theatre is languishing for a vitalising force. That force is a great actor.

The new English Roscius—who and where is he?

WHERE ARE OUR GARRICKS AND IRVINGS?

Has the stage in England ceased to breed great actors? Is it true that it can only be saved from extinction as an art form by the birth of another Garrick?

Contemporary British actors, excluding those in retirement, certainly present a somewhat unfavourable contrast when pitted name for name against their famous predecessors in almost any specific period in the history of the theatre.

Thirty years ago the leading lights of the English theatre numbered such great figures as Sir Henry Irving, Toole, Sir Herbert Tree, Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft, the Kendals, Sir Charles Wyndham, Sir J. Forbes-Robertson, Sir John Hare, Wilson Barrett, Sir George Alexander, Ellen Terry and Genevieve Ward.

Can we compare with these the principal actors now before

the British public—Sir J. Martin-Harvey for instance, Matheson Lang, or Cyril Maude? Do Henry Ainley, Gerald du Maurier, Arthur Bourchier, and Charles Hawtrey really fill the position of those giants? Will Robert Loraine, Norman McKinnel, Oscar Asche, or Godfrey Tearle really be heard of in fifty years? If any well-known name has been omitted, does it—by comparison—matter?

Do not comparisons again become even more disheartening when applied to the constellation of genius which glittered in the theatrical firmament of the earlier nineteenth century?

Instead of the majestic Kemble we have Sir John Martin-Harvey. In the place of Edmund Kean's Othello—that sublime performance—we have Oscar Asche's and Godfrey Tearle's. Our Macready may be a Matheson Lang; our Phelps, a Bourchier; our Charles Mathews, du Maurier; our Barry Sullivan, Sir Frank Benson; our Grimaldi, Grock; our Adelaide Neilson, Gladys Cooper! Have we to ask who wins?

Who is there on the contemporary stage who would be capable of playing Richard in the same hemisphere as Kean? Are we to say Seymour Hicks, who attempted it at the Coliseum? When Kean, as Richard, leaned against a pillar, Hazlitt declared that the attitude "would serve a Titian, a Raphael, or Salvator Rosa as a model."

If Irving were alive, is there an actor in harness to-day who would be worthy to tie the laces in his shoes? Our Siddons, too—where is she? Playing, forsooth, in blood-and-thunder at the Grand Guignol!

Glance again at the list of present-day players and visualise simultaneously the giants of the eighteenth century stage. Where is our Garrick, our Macklin, Quin, Bannister, or Sheridan? Are we to substitute Irene Vanbrugh for Peg Woffington, Marie Löhr for Kitty Clive, Ethel Irving for Nance Oldfield? Harking still farther back to the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries, how do our twentieth-century stage lions and lionesses compare with Betterton, "Sweet Nell Gwynne," Burbage, Alleyn, and Shakespeare?

How, indeed!

Those grand old actors had brains as well as mere deportment. Who among our matinée idols could compose such a piece of verse as Garrick's epitaph on Hogarth in Chiswick graveyard, which won the praise of Samuel Johnson?

Many of the above names may be only hearsay to the care-

less modern playgoer, ignorant of the wonderful traditions of the British theatre, but their genius has been made immortal by such pens as that of Lamb, Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt, Forster, Lewes, and by many a great poet of their time. "By jove! he is a soul!" exclaimed Byron after seeing Edmund Kean; "life, nature, truth, without exaggeration or diminution." "Garrick's face," said Dibdin, "was what he obliged you to fancy it—age, youth, plenty, poverty, everything it assumed."

Are we, then, to admit the inferiority? Must we cry, "Ichabod: The glory is departed"?

ROSCIUS—WHERE ART THOU?

Homage was recently paid by the actresses of London to the "Divine Sarah." Their touching devotion at the shrine of genius was also an expression of gratitude for a career which has ennobled dramatic art. The incident possessed another significance. Every actress cannot be a Bernhardt, but the humblest may do her bit towards the uplifting of her calling. The spirit of high endeavour was never more sorely needed in the theatrical profession than it is at the present moment.

Every true lover of the theatre hates to see it degraded. Henry Irving, above all others, helped to make the stage an honourable profession. Is his life-work to go for naught? Do our actors and actresses wish to be Rogues and Vagabonds again? Let them ask themselves that question seriously. There is more in it than merely meets the eye.

Bernhardt was wonderful in "Daniel." Her virility at the age of seventy-five astonished her admirers. The applause at the Prince's Theatre thrilled even blasé playgoers. It went on and on and on—spontaneous, deep-chested, full-bodied.

Such applause is rarely heard in London. Only genius can evoke it, and we have no geniuses now. The spark went out with Irving. It will be a grand day for the British stage when a new Roscius arises. Our stage languishes for a leader. May his advent be soon!

A prominent actor sent me a letter in which he agreed that the British stage sorely needs a chief, and he applied the words "love and reverence" to the memory of its last great

leader, Henry Irving. Another professional correspondent considered that the present state of the stage possessed elements of social danger to the actor, but he doubted whether the counter-acting influence of a new Roscius would be revolutionary. The improvement in dramatic standards can only be brought about, he said, by a steady public demand for higher entertainment.

The answer to my dubious correspondent lies in the historic evidence that prompted the question, "Roscius, Where Art Thou?"

I was dipping into Fitzgerald's "Life of David Garrick." The book gives a clear account of the deplorable condition of the stage previous to Garrick's assumption of leadership. That was in 1747, when Garrick, at the age of thirty-one, in the freshness of his genius, began his long control of Drury Lane. He was then actually referred to in writing and conversation as "Roscius"—an appellation which he had well and truly earned.

In order to appraise the effect of Roscius' advent on the scene, it is necessary to give a broad indication of the state of the eighteenth-century stage. It had fallen into such disrepute that the Government brought forward a bill to deal with actors and the "dangerous" plays they performed. This measure, notorious for its severity, was passed in 1737, three years before Garrick's amazing *début* at Goodman's Fields Theatre, in the character of Richard the Third. By one section of the Act any performer without a settlement in the parish was to be dealt with criminally as a rogue and vagabond, and fined at the suit of any informer.

Histrionic art was in an equally parlous condition. "Never," says Fitzgerald, "were players so dismally monotonous, and even regimental, in their delivery, through the stiff, inflexible chaunt they were compelled to adopt. The actors croaked, and mouthed, and 'sang.'" From the moment of the new Roscius' *début* as Richard, histrionic art in this country began to be revolutionised. His first dramatic criticism remarked that in Richard he "neither whined, bellowed, nor grumbled"; and it proceeded to catalogue numerous other vices of the contemporary players which were absent from Garrick's performance.

Thus the reformatory value of Roscius' arrival became instantly apparent. Its effects during the next six years

were so prodigious that Garrick's taking-over of Drury Lane in 1747 enabled his biographer to say :—

“ With the new management there was now to set in a hopeful era for the Drama and a complete revolution in the conduct of the stage. At Drury Lane was to begin a new reign of judgment, good sense, fine acting, lavish yet judicious outlay, excellent yet not ‘ sensational ’ attraction, good acting, good discipline, and good pieces, on which naturally was to follow prosperity. Not only came financial prosperity, but a sudden elevation of the social position of the Drama. The other theatres shared in the general ‘ rehabilitation ’ and he would have been a bold magistrate who would have now dealt with a player ‘ as a common rogue or vagabond.’ ”

“ The other theatres shared in the general rehabilitation ! ” Can you wonder that I exclaimed, “ Roscius, Where Art Thou ? ” It will be, I repeat, a grand day for the British stage when a new Roscius arises—a Roscius of whom it may be written, as Tennyson wrote of Macready :

Thine is it that the Drama did not die,
Nor flicker down to brainless pantomime,
And those gilt gauds men-children swarm to see.

In support of the above remarks, Mr. H. A. Saintsbury directed my attention to certain passages in his lecture on “ Shakespeare and the Actor.”

Acting nowadays, Mr. Saintsbury says, is mainly the exploitation of a player’s personality ; but the art of acting should be *Impersonation* : merely to express oneself does not and can never satisfy its demands.

Because a modern convention forbids us to express anything ; because it is bad manners to greet a friend with a whole-hearted affection, or speed a lover with a kiss of benison, Hamlet, forsooth, must show no undue warmth in welcoming Horatio, and Juliet must curtsey stiffly as Romeo disappears over the balcony.

“ As well play Macbeth in a frock-coat ! ” Mr. Saintsbury exclaims.

Instead of actors, or impersonators, we are reduced to types.

“ For this part the actor must stand six feet, have blue eyes and curly hair ; for that, five feet seven, with a paunch and a bald pate. I have known an actress disqualified because she

came into a manager's office with the wrong hat. The question of ability did not arise. . . . On one occasion, a company was instructed at the first rehearsal that the chief thing they must learn to forget was that the dialogue was written in blank verse ! ”

HE WILL ARISE

The Drama's new Messiah, the Genius-Interpreter—Mr. Saintsbury concludes will inevitably arise. “ I cannot believe that he will evolve from any freak movement, or come to us through any training school or so-called academy of acting. As Dick Burbage struggled through the mill in his father's touring stock company ; as Kean busked in wayside barns and village alehouses ; as Irving strove in the repertories of Sunderland, Edinburgh, and Manchester, so it is possible that to-day the new Messiah of the Drama may be serving his apprenticeship in some small repertory or fit-up company. But I am sure he is not playing the leading part.”

OH, FOR AN HOUR OF 1892 !

Bernard Shaw is notoriously addicted to standing on his head. In a moment of temporary aberration he adopts the normal position of a member of the human species when he exclaims in his preface to a new theatrical book : “ if only we could give the young lions (of our present stage) a ride in Wells' time machine and take them back to 1892 ! ”

The Grand Panjandrum is right. In 1892 or thereabouts the playbills of the London theatres presented a startling contrast to those of the present day.

It was the eve of “ The Second Mrs. Tanqueray ” which ushered in the literary drama of the 'nineties. Pinero had recently shown in “ The Profligate ” that he could give the playgoing public furiously to think. George Alexander, fresh from R. C. Carton's “ Liberty Hall ” and Oscar Wilde's “ Lady Windermere's Fan,” was about to achieve with “ Tanqueray ” a regular *coup de théâtre*.

Barrie was winning his spurs with “ Walker, London ”—John L. Toole in the cast. Beerbohm Tree, after playing Hamlet at the Haymarket, had received from Oscar Wilde the 'script of “ A Woman of No Importance.” John Hare was reviving Grundy's “ A Pair of Spectacles.” Henry Irving,

at the Lyceum, was playing Wolsey in "Henry VIII," and Becket and King Lear—Ellen Terry with him.

It was the heyday of Henry Arthur Jones, with his "Dancing Girl" and "Bauble Shop," and Willard in "The Middleman." Charles Wyndham was rollicking at the Criterion in "Brighton." Augustus Harris was producing autumn drama and pantomime at Drury Lane. William Farren was Sir Peter Teazle in "The School for Scandal" at Daly's. William Terriss was the rage in Adelphi drama. Gilbert and Sullivan were in their prime. Mrs. Bancroft reappeared in "Diplomacy." The Kendals were an institution, and Wilson Barrett was the people's idol.

You could see in those days Mrs. Patrick Campbell in "The White Rose," at the Adelphi, or Olga Nethersole in "Agatha," or Edward Terry in Pinero's "Sweet Lavender," or Julia Neilson in "Hypatia," or Hayden Coffin in "Miss Decima," or Edmund Payne and Florence St. John at the Gaiety, or Penley in "Charley's Aunt," or Henry Neville and Harry Nicholls and Herbert Campbell and Dan Leno at Drury Lane, or Charles Hawtrey and Eric Lewis in "The Grey Mare," or Arthur Roberts at the Empire, or Rehan and Bernhardt and Coquelin on their visits to London.

In '92 Forbes-Robertson had just "arrived." Arthur Bourchier, H. B. Irving, Seymour Hicks, "Jimmy" Welch, Ellis Jeffreys, Nina Boucicault, H. V. Esmond, Cyril Maude, Winifred Emery, Irene Vanbrugh, Ben Webster were young hopefults.

Oh, for an hour of 1892!

No one knows better than the players themselves how the contemporary stage has fallen from the high standard of the later Victorian era.

"The modern theatre," said Miss Lena Ashwell to the Church Congress, "is entirely divorced from real emotion. The measure is the measure of what can be got in at the box-office. So we get the stupid, banal and idiotic works which the public apparently enjoys, and there is a gradual lowering of the taste and standard of the people."

I am glad that Miss Ashwell made that reservation, "which the public apparently enjoys."

The public intelligence is persistently under-rated by the providers of theatrical entertainment. Lately it has been under-rated more than usual, and that is why there have been

so many mixed receptions of new plays, and why so many new productions have been booed.

The recrudescence of booing is the best thing that has happened to the London stage for years. It is a broom that may sweep the theatre clean.

I will tell you frankly why the London stage has sunk to its lowest common denominator. The reason is this. The men who run the London theatres, with very few exceptions, are not the kind of men who should be entrusted with the task. Their noses are glued to their box-office plans. The only accounts they care to render are concerned with financial profit and loss, and the distribution of dividends.

They have their apologists. "The theatre of to-day is all right," says a theatrical journal!

There may be an awakening, but the time is not yet. "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep."

HISTRIONIC ANÆMIA

The gospel of modulation has become a fetish on the London stage. Even "star" performers cannot be heard in the pit and gallery.

The infliction has become so intolerable that gallery patrons at several leading West End theatres have, in recent months, loudly admonished the players to "Speak up!" I gave to those protests all the publicity at my disposal, and I believe that the improvement in stage diction observable in a number of new plays was at least a partial consequence of that publicity.

Welcome support for my effort to disownenance mumbling and under-speaking was given by the causerie writer in the "Stage."

"I am glad indeed," he wrote, "to find that Mr. Archibald Haddon has made his protest in no uncertain voice as to the inaudible actor on the London stage. I consider it the paramount duty of every critic who has the welfare of the theatre at heart to stop this nuisance at once."

"The young actor who emulates the star in all his faults of diction will never get out of it until he is taken in hand by some stern stage manager, who will in the most kindly manner possible kick it out of him. Having been through it, I can give my word that it is not a pleasant process, but it is the only method by which the young actor can be trained."

MUMMERS AND MORALS.

Hercules himself might shrink from the task of exposing the underworld of the theatre. Glimpses are frequently vouchsafed in the criminal courts and in the Divorce Court, but for every sordid story that is brought to light how many are securely hidden ?

Lifting the curtain on the inner life of the theatre is always a thankless proceeding. Indeed, it is positively dangerous. You will remember the price exacted from Clement Scott for his assertion in "Great Thoughts" that "It is nearly impossible for a woman to remain pure who adopts the stage as a profession." Mrs. Kendal, too, has suffered contumely for her outspoken efforts to improve the status of her profession.

These matters need only be hinted at, and immediately the profession sees red.

On such occasions, however, the impartial observer may haply reflect : "Methinks the lady doth protest too much."

Why should there be easier rules of conduct for the stage than for other walks in life ? The immoral clergyman is unfrocked. The fraudulent solicitor is struck off the rolls. In the medical profession even etiquette cannot be flouted with impunity. On the stage, a married actress elopes with a lover and reappears with him in public a few months afterwards, and the thing is called a romance !

The theatre must put its house in order if the art of the Drama is to be rightly served. All praise to the Actors' Association for its efforts to raise the tone of the actor's calling ! A monument should be erected to Sydney Valentine, the Association's martyr to the cause.

The A.A., for example, is rapidly laying by the heels that scourge of the theatrical profession, the bogus manager. Mr. Bogus, as they call him, is the myrmidon of Satan who takes girls on tour in rotten revues, pays them about ten shillings a week, and tells them to "earn the rest."

His notoriety since the war has increased tenfold. He is the man who runs companies on nothing but his wits. The victims are poor actors and actresses whom he leaves stranded at the end of the week—moneyless, houseless, foodless, and on their uppers.

No profession or trade other than that of the stage would have tolerated indefinitely a scandal of such proportions as

this of the bogus manager. Here are a few examples of his recent activities :—

Mr. Bogus A :—Expects artists not only to play for no salary, but actually to pay in advance for the privilege of being associated with him. Puts to his personal use money given him by members of his company to find them lodgings. Decamps, leaving company penniless.

Mr. Bogus B :—His chorus girls, paid no salaries, are found walking about without any breakfast. Hands the A.A. a useless cheque in payment of his liabilities. Runs three companies, comprising sixty artists, all without payment, and calmly announces that he is “ sending out another.”

Mr. Bogus C :—Uses copyright plays without permission and without paying fees. Local manager advances money to the stranded artists to enable them to open. Artists return to town at their own expense.

Mr. Bogus D :—Disburses £2 among seven chorus girls. Decamps, leaving the message “ I have no money, so you can do what you like.”

The Actors’ Association, since it became a trade union, has done great service to the rank and file of “ the ” profession. When it has scotched the snake of Bogus, it will be a far, far better thing than it has ever done—and possibly a far, far better thing than it will ever do.

The fatal phrase, “ earn the rest,” is not confined to the life of the actress on tour. There is far too much “ earning of the rest ” in London ! To adopt Gilbert Frankau’s line in “ The Heart of a Child,” taking jewellery under false pretences is a favourite sport in the lighter walks of the theatre. It would be a simple matter to name prominent so-called actresses who revel in the limelight of social notoriety.

Away with them ! Away too, with the fancy women who are foisted on the public as actresses by moneyed backers—backers who are sometimes managers and agents as well as somebodies in the City. There you have a canker which is gnawing at the theatre’s vitals. Out with it ! Let us have a clean stage to hold the mirror up to nature, and to show, in Milton’s exquisite words, “ Virtue in her shape how lovely.”

PACKED FIRST NIGHTS.

The first-night practice of packing the house with guests of the management should be stopped. It was employed to a ridiculous extent at the *première* of the "The Gipsy Princess" at the Prince of Wales' Theatre. Even the pit and gallery were "reserved." That was an unheard-of innovation, and if the example of that particular management at the Prince of Wales' were generally followed the verdict of a first-night audience would be valueless.

Under the system now in vogue, few bookable seats, if any, are available to the paying public at London *premières*. The libraries or ticket-selling agencies do not usually have seats to sell for first nights. One or two "left-overs" may be bought at the box-office, and there may be a few purchasable upper circle seats in a theatre of exceptional holding capacity. It is only in the pit and gallery (a number of theatres have no pits or galleries) where the paying public can find accommodation.

The "reservation" of the pit and gallery is therefore the last straw that breaks the independent first-nighter's back.

Would-be paying pitites were informed at the pit door of the Prince of Wales' that only the holders of complimentary tickets were being admitted. The invited audience returned the managerial favour by bestowing on the production a wealth of indiscriminate applause. A first-night success under such conditions may well be a second-night failure and a third-night frost. It is misleading the public to describe a play as a success on the strength of the interested enthusiasm of a papered audience.

A prominent West End manager told me that he was most anxious at his theatre to put an end to this pernicious system. Mr. Cochran, I believe, only issues complimentary first-night tickets to the Press. If the evil is permitted to grow critics may have to attend the second performance, when their judgment would be assisted by genuine applause, or the lack of it.

ACTORS' AND MANAGERS' ACTRESS-WIVES.

One of the things the long-suffering playgoer has endured and continues to endure, is the actor-manager's and manager's actress-wife. This is a sore subject which, for fairly obvious reasons—chiefly timidity—has never been ventilated in print

I do not suggest for one moment that all actress-wives of popular actors or successful managers are professionally incompetent. On the other hand, a number of them undoubtedly are incapable of performing the leading characters allotted to them by their husbands, often with a view to saving the salary of a more efficient actress.

This persistent foisting of actress-wives on the theatre-going public has reached the limit of human patience. It is no uncommon occurrence to hear a disgusted playgoer remark, "I like So-and-So immensely, but I couldn't stand that . . . Mrs. So-and-So." (The task of filling in the blank I'd rather leave to you !) Moreover, by a strange perversity of fate, the actress-wife is frequently "shoved-in" a breeches part—a supposedly handsome youth, for choice—in which her defects of person are mercilessly emphasised. In the provinces especially the grievance is a very real one, and I do not doubt that many a promising young actress has been robbed of professional advancement by the preferential treatment accorded to actress-wives.

READY-MADE STUFF.

Another deplorable feature of the theatrical times is the inordinate reliance on Continental and American attractions—ready-made stuff, requiring little or no exercise of originality on the part of the home producers.

In the season of 1919-20, the London stage was swamped with American successes. In 1920-21 we enjoyed a welcome respite from the dump of Broadway farces. Only about half-a-dozen American pieces were staged in London, and most of them failed to attract.

During the season of 1921-22, if all promises are fulfilled, we are likely to see about a score of American plays, chiefly sensational dramas.

The danger of this lack of self-reliance lies in its consequent loss of classical traditions.

Our actors and actresses are losing those practical schools of training which enabled them to maintain that proficiency in the established forms of their art which has hitherto been a pride of their calling.

Frequent repetitions of the old English comedies gave to the English players a breadth of style and a personal grace

which made them at least the equals of all other practitioners of the art of acting the world over.

How many of them, nowadays, are able to wear doublet and hose as to the manner born ?

ARE THE CRITICS HONEST ?

Do the dramatic critics tell the truth ? "What is your real opinion ?" I am sometimes asked the morning after a *première*. The question, when I first heard it, came as a shock to my pride as a professional dramatic critic of more than thirty years' experience. I replied, with some asperity, that I never wrote one thing and thought another. My printed opinion embodied my honest view of the play.

Nearly every recognised critic on the London newspaper Press, would, I believe, be justified in returning a similar answer to such an inquiry. The critics are absolutely free and unfettered. They are never "instructed" by their editors, except, perhaps, in the matter of space, which is governed by arbitrary conditions.

The truth is told ; but there are various ways of telling it. On the whole, straightforwardness prevails. Critics, however, are human. They take no pleasure in hitting a fellow when he's down. A play with failure written all over it may be well-intentioned. Its producer is actuated by artistic motives. The next morning you can almost hear the critic begging you, apologetically, to read between the lines of his notice the condemnation which he has not the heart to write.

So the truth is told ; but is it told sufficiently ?

In many instances, no !

In recent years the London stage has often been disgraced by obscene productions. The licence accorded to theatrical producers in the matter of stage attire and innuendo has not been paralleled since the Restoration. There has been a long procession of bedroom farces and salacious revues.

The tide of filth was stemmed, but not by the dramatic critics. One or two of them spoke up, at the risk of being stigmatised as prudes. Strange to say, they did not lose their jobs. Why ? Because they banked on public opinion, which is always a mighty arbiter when it comes to a scrap between right and wrong.

There are other aspects of London dramatic criticism which call for comment besides the question of honesty of expression.

The critics who hold no truck with managers or performers, who confine their business entirely to witnessing and judging a play, can almost be counted on the fingers of one hand.

A good deal more serious is the practice—fortunately limited in scope—of combining Press agency with dramatic criticism. The calling of *bona fide* Press agent is honourable in itself. It ceases to be honourable when the Press agent is also a professional critic, who, from the nature of his obligations, prostitutes to puffery the newspaper for which he writes.

FREEDOM OF THE "GODS."

I was pleased to hear of the triumphant rehabilitation of the Gallery First Nighters, the famous Old Guard of the freedom of the theatre. The applause or censure which has the weight of genuine, unprejudiced feeling comes essentially from the gallery.

Spasmodic attempts to counter that feeling by the introduction of a claque have always, in the long run, come to grief. No play can succeed if the gallery is determinedly against it. *Per contra*, the gallery has always been an invaluable stimulus to the past-masters and mistresses of dramatic art, as well as to its novices. I have heard the claque a good deal lately. Down with it !

LONG LIVE THE PIT !

It is a mistake even in the tiniest theatres to abolish the pit.

This can be proved by the frequent restoration of pits at theatres where the ground floor had been wholly given over to the stalls.

Stalls folk don't applaud.

Even when they are pleased.

The pit does.

Applause is the life-blood of the theatre.

It stimulates the actors.

It would be better for the actors if the pitites had the front seats, right up to the orchestra, and the stallites the rear seats, as in the cinemas.

That, I know, is a counsel of perfection. I employ it as an illustration of the psychological importance of the pit. Applause (if any) should come from all parts of the theatre. It should be distributed as much as possible.

If one part of the house appears to be cold and the other hot, the uneasy deduction may be made that the play or the player appeals only to a particular section of the public.

ARE THE LONDON THEATRES OUT OF DATE?

Sol Bloom is a name that appeals to the senses as refreshingly as "the flowers that bloom in the spring, tra la." Its owner, temperamentally, is just as salubrious. Mr. Sol Bloom, architect of a hundred American theatres, came to England a year ago with a desire to spring-clean our cobwebby playhouses. I caught him at the Carlton Hotel—an elderly man with a placid countenance, a frank expression, and clear eyes which gazed benignly at his interlocutor through large horn spectacles.

A stage expert remarked to me recently that, in his opinion, two-thirds of the London theatres should be scrapped. Mr. Sol Bloom was too polite to say anything of the sort, but I have no doubt that he thought as much—twice over. After building about half the modern theatres in New York, he came to England to gather from our auditoriums and stages fresh ideas in construction for his next architectural experiments. Imagine his amazement when he found the majority of the London theatres underground, with their audiences like the ghost of Hamlet's father, moles i' the earth!

When a pipe burst at the Carlton Mr. Sol Bloom could not be bothered to wait for the plumber. The million-dollars' man tucked up his sleeves and immediately repaired it himself. When Mr. Bloom caught sight of a whirling ventilator in the proscenium-roof of a West End theatre, where its atmospheric vibrations were playing havoc with the acoustics, I guess he could hardly have restrained himself, if a ladder had been handy, from clambering up and tearing the ventilator down.

Mr. Bloom, I repeat, was too diffident and tactful to criticise in detail the architectural defects and deficiencies of the British theatres. He gave me, instead, an exhaustive summary of the latest methods of theatre construction in America. His catalogue of improvements and innovations convinced me absolutely that the sooner Mr. Bloom realises his ambition to build in London one or two theatres on the latest American principles the better it will be for the comfort of British playgoers and players. There is no doubt what-

ever that in Mr. Bloom's theatres the audiences will be more luxuriously seated than they are at present, with an unobstructed view of the stage, a more refined atmosphere to breathe, and fewer aural annoyances. Fire dangers will be lessened and facilities for escape increased.

Mr. Sol Bloom only wanted the sites for his projected new London theatres. "I will build them either for myself," he told me, "to satisfy my own desire to give the British public what I conceive to be the perfect playhouse, or I will build them for any other person actuated by similar motives. If your building regulations do not coincide with my ideas, I will adapt my ideas to your regulations. I did not come to England to teach, but to learn. The experience of my professional lifetime is at your service in return for any fresh knowledge I may acquire from a careful study of your architectural system."

Mr. Bloom erected the beautiful Eltinge Theatre in New York—among dozens of other Broadway buildings. Its foyers and lounges are famous. In the latest London theatres, on plots of equal measurement, the *entr'acte* accommodation is atrocious. That is my opinion, not Mr. Bloom's, and I do not doubt that all stalls and dress-circle patrons will support that assertion. We are too much the slaves of insular conservatism in this country. It plagues us in the theatre in a thousand different ways.

THE DEBACLE OF 1921.

There is rarely smoke without fire. The multitude of troubles which assailed the London theatres in the season of 1920-21 could be partly attributed to causes outlined in the foregoing observations.

It was one of the worst seasons within living memory, artistically as well as financially. The principal causes were the coal stoppage, the drought, restricted train services, drink legislation, exorbitant rentals and prices of admission, unattractive plays and general maladministration.

At the height of the slump, only half a dozen of the forty West End theatres were making ends meet. *One ordinary summer evening there were six people in the stalls of a certain theatre which accommodates two thousand.* Many other houses had from twenty to thirty stalls occupied, not all of them paid for.

Increased prices of admission also hit the theatres hard. Playgoers stayed away, or were driven to the music-halls and cinemas. Men who would not be seen except in the stalls preferred to remain at home rather than appear in the circle. People who habitually attended a favourite play several times visited it only once. The imposition of sixteen-shilling stalls (a guinea on Saturday nights, plus four shillings tax) was almost a suicidal move.

As for the effect of drink restrictions, a single illustration will suffice.

An American, on his arrival in London, booked two stalls for the Gaiety. The piece was "Faust-on-Toast." He went out for a much-needed refresher. The bar was closed. Next morning he called on the ticket agent who sold him the seats. The only printable part of his diatribe was this: "I'm off to Paris at once."

The theatres suffered as much from managerial mishandling as from the assaults of Nature and parliamentary legislation. Productions were bad in other senses than the artistic. Trading in cynicism and sensuality has frightened an enormous clientele. It is nowadays quite a common occurrence for a man to ring up a ticket agency and ask, "Can I take my wife and daughter to so-and-so?" The agent dare not imperil his custom. He replies in the negative, and the deal is off. So much for your Up in Mabel's Rooms. Much good they are doing the theatre!

Where is the quality of greatness which should distinguish the work of the London stage?

THE WAY TO RUIN THE THEATRE.

Put up the prices of admission on every likely occasion, and keep them up as long as possible—that is the way to ruin the theatre.

That is the way to do it, because that is the way to keep the people out.

People were kept out of the theatre in millions during the slumps of 1921 as a direct result of the insensate managerial policy of killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. The goose, having sensed the danger, refused to lay any more. Hence those acres of empty seats.

The way to ruin the theatre may be pursued in several

directions, diverging from the main road of exorbitant prices of admission.

One of these by-paths to ruination is indulgence in box-office trickery. For example, if you are a theatrical manager and business unexpectedly drops, sell your remaining stalls at night (surreptitiously, of course) for half the price you have been charging during the day.

By this means you will ensure dissatisfaction among earlier purchasers of seats, who will certainly get wind of the trick and will make a point of informing their whole circle of acquaintances.

Another easy by-way to ruination is a general resort to the growing practice of charging higher prices of admission on public holidays.

In other words: Bleed the public whenever the public is helpless to resist.

Do not, however, confine the bleeding process to public holidays. *Put the prices up on Saturday nights.*

Do not, of course, dream of reducing prices in times of national stress, when money is tight.

Impositions of this description, added to the old, old grievances of preposterous charges for cloak-rooms, refreshments, and programmes, point the way to ruin in the theatre. The road to destruction was followed in 1921 by many London theatrical managers. The less money the public had to spend, the more determinedly these managers stuck to their fifteen-shilling and fourteen-and-sixpenny stalls.

Do not ruin the theatre, gentlemen. *Popularise it! Popularise it by stabilising prices of admission.*

Bank on the half-guinea stall and half-crown pit, and do not play ducks and drakes with those institutions any more.

It is better to have your theatre two-thirds full at reasonable prices than two-thirds empty at unreasonable ones. That way salvation lies. Heaven knows the theatre needs as much popularising as it can get. Something must be done—and quickly—to counter the lure of music-halls and cinemas, with their cheaper seats and greater comfort.

The season of 1920-21 was a disastrous one for more reasons than the lack of good plays. The London theatres, taking them as a whole, are out of touch with the go-ahead spirit of the times. They are old-fashioned in control as well as in construction.

* * * * *

Criticism should be constructive. Here are a few suggestions. Let us have :—

Healthier plays.

Lower prices.

Honest first nights.

All seats bookable.

Separate seats in pits and galleries.

Large hats and feathers forbidden.

No more queues.

Earlier *prémières*.

Shorter intervals.

Reasonable prices for refreshments.

Free programmes and cloak-rooms.

Less mumbling and under-speaking by actors and actresses.

More dignity after the fall of the curtain at first nights.

When a principal performer is prevented from appearing, notification of his absence from the cast should be posted outside the theatre, not inside.

Permission to smoke in theatres presenting comedies, farces, musical comedies, and revues.

Fewer wives of actor-managers shoved into leading parts.

Fewer protected women as leading ladies.*

Some of this advice, I know, will be disregarded as a counsel of perfection. The programme trouble, for example. I am constantly receiving fiery letters from playgoers about the imposition of sixpence or a shilling for programmes consisting chiefly of advertisements. The difficulty is that in nearly every London theatre the programmes, cloak-rooms, and refreshments are farmed out to caterers. Hence those microscopic shilling teas and coffees at 500 per cent. profit. These abuses, however, are too glaring to be insurmountable.

A time will come !

* * * * *

Popularise the theatre !

* "While well-off amateurs and 'protected' women are being engaged in our theatres, there are many clever and deserving actors and actresses workless and starving. A good many are even in receipt of Parish Relief, and thankful to get it."—Carados in the "Referee," Christmas Day, 1921.

SHAKESPEARE AND THE CLASSICS.

*“Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson’s learned sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy’s child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.”*

MILTON.

CHAPTER II

SHAKESPEARE AND THE CLASSICS

LOST, STOLEN, OR STRAYED, THE IMMORTAL BRITISH DRAMA !

Why are the British dramatic classics almost totally absent from the programme for 1922 ? Where are the masterpieces of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, of Vanbrugh and Farquhar, Wycherley and Congreve, Sheridan and Goldsmith, and the nineteenth-century dramatists ?

They are banished because the London stage is controlled to a disproportionate extent by unprofessional speculators, who are ignorant of its glorious traditions and incapable of appreciating its possibilities as a medium for literary and artistic expression.

England's lack of a National Theatre is a principal cause of the present-day neglect of our dramatic classics. The majority of plays dating farther back than the nineteenth century are no longer capable of attracting paying audiences. That does not imply that they are worthless. It means, chiefly, that the taste of playgoers has changed. The grand old plays have ceased to please the multitude, without whose support our rental-ridden commercial theatres cannot keep open door.

Even if the dramatic classics were popularly acceptable, the men who run the London theatres to-day are not of a type to consider them. Those men, for the most part, are either dividend-hunters themselves, or are tied to the apron-strings of company promoters. London theatre-managers of taste and culture are conspicuous chiefly by their absence. "Get Rich Quick" is the motto of the others. The short cut to fortune in the theatre does not lie by way of the masterpieces of dramatic literature, such as "The School for Scandal," the Restoration comedies, and the Elizabethan tragedies.

It would be so, perhaps, if the taste of the play-going public were maintained at a higher standard. No doubt there is more than a grain of truth in the adage "The Drama's laws the Drama's patrons give." Faulty education, therefore, is partly to blame for the reduction of the theatre to the level of the popular restaurant. Let us begin at the beginning, and familiarise in the schools the next and future generations of playgoers with the riches of our dramatic literature. The schoolboys and schoolgirls who delight in Shakespeare at their desk will not be content, when the time comes for them to exercise their own discernment, with vulgar farces and girl-and-music shows.

The establishment of a National Theatre, either by State-aid or public philanthropy, is a vital need of the British Drama. Its necessity was never more apparent than at this moment. Our classical drama was recently represented at only one of London's thirty-odd West-End theatres—at the Aldwych, where the character of Macbeth was being played by an American actor!

That condition of affairs has prevailed, on and off, for many years. Among its devastating results is a decline in the art of acting. Great actors are not bred in an atmosphere of girl and music. Muscle and brawn can only be developed on pabulum which—as the old player said in "Trelawny of the 'Wells'"—you can "dig your teeth into." Nourishment of that description may be extracted from the masterpieces of our dramatic literature. These should be regularly performed; otherwise their histrionic traditions will be lost. Such regularity of presentment would be ensured in a National Theatre controlled by men whose ambitions are not the sport of avarice.

ENTER WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

[A tablet erected by the London County Council was unveiled in October 1920 at 88, Curtain-road, Shoreditch, to commemorate the site of *The Theatre*, which was the first building erected in London especially for the performance of plays.]

A young man named William Shakespeare came up to London from Stratford-on-Avon about the year 1590. London's first playhouse, *The Theatre*, had then been in existence fourteen years. Near by was the *Curtain Playhouse*, erected a

year later than The Theatre. It is possible that the Newington Butts playhouse also existed in 1590, but there could not have been more than three theatres in London when William Shakespeare came to town.

William Shakespeare was a trained actor. He had, too, the useful accomplishment of play-adapting; so the company of Lord Strange's Men at The Theatre gave him a hearty welcome.

The builder and proprietor of The Theatre, James Burbage, was the first to profit by the labours of the new arrival. No doubt he told young Shakespeare the story of The Theatre; how he, a joiner as well as an actor and manager, had built the first playhouse with borrowed money (£666); and how he was experiencing the utmost difficulty in keeping the establishment going in the face of bitter opposition by the Puritan citizens.

"Fortunately for me," he may have said to Shakespeare, "I am supported by the Court and the nobility. We have our royal licence from Queen Bess, who loves a play. We were Lord Leicester's Servants until he died two years ago; now we are Lord Strange's. The Puritans are strong and venomous, but we shall beat them."

Shakespeare, listening sympathetically, determined to take a hand in the fray. The old joiner-actor "showed him over the house"—proudly, no doubt, for this was not only London's first theatre, but—*mirabile dictu!*—it actually had a roof!

The man whose works were to "out-top knowledge" instantly set about his mission of ennobling the theatre.

London's first theatre had only eight more years to live. Erected in 1576, it was pulled down in 1598. Within those eight years Shakespeare immortalised The Theatre. On its sliding platform were performed, it is believed, the national poet's earlier plays: "Love's Labour's Lost," "The Comedy of Errors," "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," "Romeo and Juliet," "Midsummer Night's Dream," "Richard II.," "King John," "The Merchant of Venice," and "Henry IV."

They had the benefit of the services of James Burbage's son, Richard Burbage, England's first great tragedian. When The Theatre was pulled down to spite a refractory ground landlord, Burbage's sons constructed Shakespeare's Globe Theatre (on the site of Barclay and Perkins' brewery) of the

material they carted away. The actors, in the aureole of Shakespeare's genius, became the Lord Chamberlain's Servants, and finally, at the accession of King James, the King's Players. So Burbage builded better than he knew.

* * * * *

I doubt whether the average theatre-goer to-day has more than a vague notion of what these earliest theatres were like. An excellent impression of them may be obtained at the London Museum, near St. James's Palace. In the basement of that institution there are some half-dozen illuminated models of Old London. One of them, showing the Great Fire, is equipped with mechanical lighting devices which are entertaining as well as instructive, especially to youthful visitors. Another represents the first theatres, the Globe and the Swan, erected amid the gardens and bear-baiting arenas of Bankside, opposite Old St. Paul's.

Those theatres were wooden edifices, circular in shape, as proved by Shakespeare's description in the prologue to "Henry V." :—

Can this cockpit hold
The vasty fields of France ? or may we cram
Within this wooden O the very casques
That did affright the air at Agincourt ?

That passage refers particularly to the Globe playhouse, built of material from The Theatre when it was pulled down. Drawings of the Globe playhouse are extant, and these are erroneously believed by many people to represent Shakespeare's Globe. That workshop of Elizabethan masterpieces was, however, burnt down, and it is the second, or re-built Globe, which is shown in the pictures. No picture of Shakespeare's Globe has come to us. It was destroyed by fire in June 1613, when a wad of cannon-shot fired in "Henry VIII." hit the roof, which instantly burst into flames.

AN "ELIZABETHAN" THEATRE.

The Elizabethan theatre recently opened at Norwich (the Maddermarket) is not as Elizabethan as it might be. Its designers, in roughly basing the structure on that of the Fortune Theatre, imitated not so much the playhouse of Queen Elizabeth's time as that of the Jacobean edifices. The Fortune was opened in 1601, only two years before the queen's

death, and it existed until 1661, in the reigns and periods of Elizabeth, James I., Charles I., the Commonwealth, and Charles II.

This is an important distinction, in view of the claim of the Maddermarket management that the place has been built "so that Shakespeare can be given on the stage for which he wrote." The Theatre of Shakespeare's working years as actor and dramatist (1591-1613) was not squarely built, like the Maddermarket, but round—circular inside and polygonal outside, somewhat resembling, exteriorly, a five-sided pepper-box.

The Fortune was the first theatre constructed with a square auditorium. All the previous, and typical, Elizabethan theatres—The Theatre, Curtain, Newington Butts, Rose, Blackfriars, Swan and Globe—were circular and polygonal. The stages of the two Globe theatres, where Shakespeare's works were produced (they were not performed at the Fortune) jutted into the middle of the pit or yard. That was also the case at the Fortune, the builder's contract of which has come down to us, whereas at the Maddermarket the apron stage juts comparatively slightly into the auditorium.

A veritable reproduction of the Elizabethan theatre of Shakespeare's time would have no seats in the pit beyond a few stools carried by the groundlings. There would be no scenery (only draperies) and no curtain. Its "unworthy scaffold" (see "*Henry V.*") would be strewn with rushes. The roof of the building would be open to the sky except for a thatched covering to the rear portion of the stage—over the musick gallery, above the tiring rooms (or dressing rooms), which were located behind the back curtain and at the sides of the stage. The dresses of the players would be gorgeous, but the female characters would all be performed by boys.

Those are the characteristics of the true Elizabethan theatre, and they are only superficially reproduced at the Maddermarket in its imitation of the non-Shakespearean Fortune Theatre. The temporary replica of a Shakespearean theatre in the Old London exhibition at Earl's Court some years ago was considerably nearer the mark.

My criticism of the Maddermarket Theatre has been endorsed by Mr. James P. Maginnis, civil engineer, of Queen Anne's-gate. Mr. Maginnis submitted to me photographs of beautiful models of the Fortune Theatre which he

constructed for Professor Brander Matthews' collection at Columbia University. The professor, a renowned Shakespearean authority, describes the models as the gem of his collection. "These models," Mr. Maginnis remarks, "bear out your contentions." They do, indeed. I have seen the Maddermarket Theatre, and I have no hesitation in pronouncing it a hybrid work, only distantly resembling the true Elizabethan playhouse.

It seems a pity, by the way, that the Maginnis models should have gone to America. Surely they should be housed at the London Museum, as well as the model of Drury Lane stage of 1776, as arranged by the brothers Adam, which also went to Columbia University.

SHAKESPEARE THE MAN.

What was the colour of the man Shakespeare's hair, eyes, complexion; the contour of his features; his physical proportions?

We saw an auburn Shakespeare in "Will Shakespeare" at the Shaftesbury. That is the traditional view, and it is based on sound evidence.

Only two likenesses of Shakespeare are beyond suspicion. They are the bust above his grave in Trinity Church, Stratford-on-Avon, and the first folio portrait engraved by Martin Droeshout. The portrait, unlike the bust, gives no clue to colouring or physique.

Shakespeare died in 1616. The bust must have existed before 1623, the date of the first folio, because it is referred to in verses prefixed to that edition. It was probably, therefore, placed in the church within a year or two of the dramatist's death.

When the whitewash of an eighteenth-century vandal was removed from the bust in 1861, the original colouring of 1616-1623 was discovered. It revealed Shakespeare as a man in the flush of manhood, with eyes of a light hazel and auburn hair and beard.

So much is above dispute. Almost equally non-contentious is the testimony of the antiquary, John Aubrey, born ten years after Shakespeare's death, who had it from the actor Beeston, a contemporary of Shakespeare, that the poet was "a handsome, well-shap't man; very good company, and of a very ready and pleasant smooth wit."

Another contemporary, Shakespeare's friend, Ben Jonson, repeatedly described him as "gentle." The bust also suggests, in its proportions, that he was a man of exceptionally good physique.

No play has succeeded in embodying Shakespeare's personality in a wholly acceptable environment. He appears in Shaw's "Dark Lady of the Sonnets," and has been played in its various productions by Mr. Granville Barker, Mr. Milton Rosmer, and Mr. Nicholas Hennen; but that work was merely a flippant *pièce d'occasion*. The only considerable effort of the kind that had seen the footlights, prior to "Will Shakespeare," was a four-act comedy, "Shakespeare," by E. R. Greville, at the old Globe Theatre in 1892. In that play, T. B. Thalberg was Shakespeare, and the action showed the poet deer-stealing, starving in a London garret, drinking at the Tabard, flirting at Court with Elizabeth Throgmorton, and ultimately returning, disillusioned, to his distracted Anne Hathaway—all an "invention," of course, as Miss Clemence Dane was careful to label her "Will Shakespeare."

MYSTERY OF THE DARK LADY.

Who was the black woman of Shakespeare's Sonnets—the woman who, by general consent, must have been the immortal poet's light o' love?

Further discussion of that fascinating literary mystery was provoked by the announcement of the Shaftesbury Theatre management that in Miss Clemence Dane's "invention," entitled "Will Shakespeare," Mary Fitton, assumed to be the Dark Lady of the Sonnets, would be played by Miss Mary Clare. Observe that diplomatic "assumed to be"! Pending the discovery of additional documentary evidence—discovered, maybe, in some old muniment room or parish archives—"assumed to be" was the proper term to apply to any attempted solution or embodiment of the feminine enigma of the Sonnets.

If the Sonnets, as some few authorities suppose, merely deal with imaginary people, the Dark Lady may never have existed. If the Sonnets, as most authorities aver, are passionately autobiographical, her identity remains a matter of conjecture, since there are no known facts of Shakespeare's life to warrant a definite conclusion. Thus we are reduced

to theory and surmise, of which there has been a prodigious outpouring in scores of learned books.

Shakespeare's Sonnets compose, perhaps, the sublimest poem in our language. They are also a series of exasperating interrogation marks. Who was the friend whom Shakespeare, in the first twenty-six Sonnets, urged to marry, and whom, in Sonnets twenty-seven to fifty-five, he forgave for having robbed him of his best beloved ? Who was the woman censured by the poet in Sonnets 127 to 152 for her infidelity ?

The life secret of William Shakespeare is hidden—perhaps for all time—in those astounding poems.

His inamorata, whoever she may have been, was dark-complexioned, probably Moorish. Her blackness is emphasised unmistakably in half-a-dozen of the Sonnets.

The theory that Mary Fitton—a woman of easy virtue at the Court of Queen Elizabeth—was Shakespeare's Dark Lady will not bear investigation, even though Mary was the Dark Lady of Bernard Shaw's play, "The Dark Lady of the Sonnets," as well as of Miss Dane's "Will Shakespeare." No one thought of Mary Fitton in that connection before eccentric old Thomas Tyler dug her out at the British Museum in the 'eighties of the nineteenth century. Shaw reviewed Tyler's book on the Fitton theory, and then made Mary the Dark Lady of his play. He had no sooner done so than an authentic portrait of Mary Fitton came to light, revealing her not dark, but fair !

So much for Mary Fitton as Shakespeare's mistress !

The bubble is burst—why attempt to perpetuate it, even in a play-invention ?

The veritable baleful beauty of the Sonnets was probably the dark-complexioned tavern-keeper of Shakespeare's lodging-house, the George Inn at Southwark. "By the Lord, thou sayest true (quoth Falstaff), but is not my hostess of the tavern a most sweet wench ? "

Who can doubt, too, that the hero-villain of the Sonnets, the man who stole Shakespeare's Dark Lady, was the poet's beloved patron, Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, to whom Shakespeare said in dedicating to him his early poem, "Lucrece" : "What I have done is yours ; what I have to do is yours ; being part in all I have, devoted yours."

How pathetic that dedication, in view of the later drama of the Dark Lady of the Sonnets !

*“WILL SHAKESPEARE.”**

So it was Christopher Marlowe, not the Earl of Southampton, who, according to Miss Clemence Dane's “invention,” as she called her play, “Will Shakespeare,” stole Shakespeare's Dark Lady of the Sonnets, presumed by Miss Dane to be Mary Fitton! Here, indeed, was something for the Shakespeare theorists to dig their teeth into!

Mary went to a tavern disguised as a boy. The place of assignation was a bedroom, where the Dark Lady proved to Marlowe (and the audience) that she was truly skilled, in Byron's phrase, “with the ogle of a roguish eye.”

She told Marlowe, in effect, that her meetings with Shakespeare had been mere philanderings. “But it was something to be with him among the stars,” she said, “something to be his Juliet.”

Then the thunder pealed, and the lightning flashed, and the wind wailed as Will Shakespeare came in at the window. A leap, a struggle, and Marlowe fell mortally wounded. What a good thing they missed at the Surrey in the old transpontine melodrama!

That was an “invention” and no mistake. It saddled Shakespeare with the onus of Christopher Marlowe's death! †

Whether Marlowe died by his own hand or Shakespeare's in the fight between the two rivals for Mary Fitton's favour was relatively a quibble in view of the fact that Shakespeare would certainly be charged with the crime of manslaughter, and possibly of murder.

The immortal poet was, therefore, shown in inglorious circumstances; and a play which detracted from Shakespeare's glory could not be acceptable to English men and women.

If a fictional Shakespeare had to be created, why not have conjured up a figure worthy of his works? It would have

*“Will Shakespeare,” a “£10,000 production,” ran for only seven weeks and three days at the Shaftesbury.

† In the preface to “Christopher Marlowe” (Mermaid Series) Mr. Havelock Ellis writes:—

“In May (1593) we know that Marlowe was at the little village of Deptford, not many miles from London. There was turbulent blood there, and wine; there were courtesans and daggers. Here Marlowe was slain, killed by a serving-man, a rival in a quarrel over bought kisses—‘a bawdy serving-man.’ They buried him in an unknown spot, beneath the grey towers of St. Nicholas, and they wrote in the parish book: ‘Christopher Marlowe, Slain by Francis Archer, the 1 of June, 1593.’

been possible, surely, to have pictured Shakespeare as the man he was—human, no doubt, but lovable—without going to the extreme of representing him almost as a monster; for in "Will Shakespeare" he appeared as a wife-deserter, a deserter of his unborn child, the paramour of "a clamorous harlot," a tavern brawler, and the cause of a violent death.

Miss Dane's poetic dialogue sounded a little turgid on the stage, but in the book it is richly imaginative. Its delivery at the *première* was largely a gabble, Mr. Arthur Whitby alone having the authoritative Shakespearean manner. The scenic representation was beautiful—a triumph for the artist-designer, Mr. George Harris, and the producer, Mr. Basil Dean.

SHAKESPEARE IN REVUE.

A travesty of the Court of Queen Elizabeth, interpolated in "As You Were!" at the London Pavilion, was one of the liveliest conceits of the kind since the palmy days of Gaiety burlesque. Mlle. Delysia, wondrously attired as the Virgin Queen, greeted Sir Walter Raleigh as "Wally," and was addressed in return as Lizzie and Bessie. Raleigh, having just arrived from America, interlarded his gad-zooks with gee-whizzes, and described in ludicrous blank verse the deleterious effects of jazz dancing and prohibition.

William Shakespeare* and Francis Bacon contended before the Queen for the foreign and colonial rights of "Twelfth Night." Shakespeare (a life-like make-up by Mr. Morris Harvey) assured Bacon that his rivalry was vain against one who had the honour of being mistaken for Sir Hall Caine.

Shakespeare then posed against a pedestal, and, as *compère*, introduced in deliciously anachronistic terms the various characters of the travesty. He recommended one airily clad young woman's attire as "summer suiting for demobilised staff officers," another's as a "new design for a uniform for the Royal Air Force." And when Mlle. Delysia arrived in her skin-tight costume as Lucifer, Shakespeare gravely announced that "the lady will now proceed to dive from the roof into no more than six inches of water."

Mlle. Delysia's Queen Bess was peculiarly knowing and sportive—all "nods and becks and wreathed smiles." A

* Shakespeare was also burlesqued by Mr. Miles Malleson in a musical extravaganza, "Now and Then," at the Vaudeville, September 17, 1921.

similarly alluring coquettishness characterised the Anne Hathaway of Miss Mona Vivian, while Mr. Harvey's Shakespeare was the cause of monumental merriment.

ELLEN TERRY AS THE NURSE.

It was a golden-haired, golden-gowned Juliet that Miss Doris Keane presented in her London revival of "Romeo and Juliet."

Fair Juliets we have had before, and the text warrants them, but this Juliet was the fairest of the fair. The eye was ravished by her golden loveliness. It would happily be conceded that—

She hung upon the cheek of night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear.

Unfortunately for Miss Keane, "Romeo and Juliet" cannot be acted merely as a *tableau vivant*. The part must be played as well as looked. Juliet, by voice, temperament, and action, must display a "bounty as boundless as the sea, a love as deep." Such achievement is not within the compass of any actress who has not undergone an arduous novitiate in the art of Shakespeare. Ambition almost ceases to be praiseworthy when it o'erleaps itself. "No actress," Ellen Terry has said, "can gain experience enough to play that wonderful young girl, Juliet, properly, till she is old enough to play the Nurse."

Miss Keane's ambition to play Juliet resulted in a production replete with excellences subsidiary to its main intention. It sent an audience into transports of delight over performances of the Nurse and Mercutio—by Miss Ellen Terry and Mr. Leon Quartermaine—which will live in stage history alongside those of Mrs. Stirling and Wilson Barrett.

The Romeo was fairly easy to condone, because Mr. Basil Sydney did convey the fact that he apprehended the meaning of the part, even though his executive ability mocked his intuition. He had not the Shakespearean manner, and his gait was ill adapted to doublet and hose. The effort to illustrate Romeo's calf-love for Rosaline, in the opening scenes, showed that Mr. Sydney's mind had entered into Romeo's although his body remained Mr. Sydney's; and the same distracting disqualification characterised, more or less, his performance as a whole.

Miss Ellen Terry's art made the Nurse infinitely more than the lay figure that the character ordinarily is. The Nurse, indeed, dominated the play. That should not be, and the fact that it was so speaks eloquently of the disordered aspect of this revival.

The Nurse, being Ellen Terry, was entirely lovable—too lovable for the text. Her mothering and teasing of Juliet were so humanly moving and amusing that the audience could have hugged the actress even as Juliet hugged her.

The charm of Ellen Terry was as irresistible at the age of seventy-one as it was in the part of Juliet in 1882. There was a great and memorable scene when the curtain fell on the episode of the Nurse's teasing of Juliet over Romeo's message. The enchanted audience called the actress again and again, and, very rightly, would not be content until Miss Terry had acknowledged the call alone.

Mr. Leon Quartermaine's triumph as Mercutio was hardly second to Miss Terry's. His was a great Mercutio.

“MUCH ADO” AND THE TERRYS.

Ellen Terry, in spectacles, was the most excited woman in London when, from a stage box at the King's Theatre, Hammersmith, she witnessed for the first time the Benedick of her brother Fred. Miss Terry could hardly repress her emotion. She fluttered and flitted about the box like an enraptured girl. Wreathed in smiles and bubbling with happiness she applauded nearly every scene and situation in Mr. Terry's admirable revival of “Much Ado About Nothing.”

* * * * *

How many people in the audience knew, I wonder, that the act-drop at the King's brought poignant memories to Miss Terry every time it rose and fell on immortal scenes which the veteran actress, judging by the motion of her lips, seemed to be repeating to herself word by word. The act-drop was Henry Irving's curtain at the old Lyceum.* Although the fine old relic was getting the worse for wear (you could almost see through it when the scenery was being set), Mr. Mulholland refused to replace it with a more ornamental curtain.

Ellen Terry was Beatrice behind that curtain to Irving's

Benedick. Irving's revival of "Much Ado About Nothing" was one of his wisest moves. Apart from his own inimitable Benedick, the revival presented, in Ellen Terry, the greatest Beatrice of all time. How the beautiful Beatrice at the King's, Miss Violet Farebrother, must have revelled in Ellen Terry's applause!

Although Londoners were witnessing Mr. Terry's Benedick for the first time, the actor played the part at Stratford eleven years ago. He has put on flesh since then, and his Benedick was therefore a bluff and hearty fellow, exuding bonhomie. Dictionally, gesturally, the performance was a charming one; but, to be candid, Father Time is flipping Mr. Terry by the ear. You could see, in his Benedick, a splendid future Falstaff and a perfect Bluff King Hal. Mr. Terry must give us "The Merry Wives" and "Henry VIII." We won't be happy till we get them!

MARTIN-HARVEY'S HAMLET.

There was much to admire and not a little to deplore in Sir John Martin-Harvey's revival of "Hamlet" at Covent Garden. The production was decorative, and many of the performances were excellent, but on the whole—excluding Hamlet—the acting did not reach the West End standard. One or two of the players gave painful exhibitions of incompetence.

Martin-Harvey's Hamlet has improved since his London début in the part on 1905. It is now an admirable exposition of the role—finely and clearly spoken, and performed with varied gesture and an attractive blending of sweetness and dignity.

The popular actor has altered his original ending of the tragedy. His death scene was always poetically impressive. Its impressiveness is now enhanced by the reintroduction of Fortinbras, in which character Mr. Gordon Craig's son (Miss Ellen Terry's grandson), Mr. Robin Gordon Craig, made a promising début. Mr. Robin Gordon Craig is tall and of good physique. He looked well in his Viking costume, and delivered his few lines effectively in a strong "Terry voice."

An interesting innovation marked the entry of Fortinbras. Hamlet's body was lifted by his retainers and held aloft, at arm's length, as the curtain slowly descended to mournful

music. The effect is pictorially and dramatically touching, and is quite in keeping with the spirit of the scene. The staging of the play calls for unqualified praise. Only draperies were employed—of light and dark blue, yellow, purple, and cloth of gold—and they were artistically lighted from limes in the wings and auditorium. It was a noble setting of a noble play, and, despite the minor histrionic defects, the revival justified a worthy ambition.

AN AMERICAN MACBETH.

America's best gifts to the London stage have been the Shakespearean performances of Edwin Booth, Ada Rehan, Edward H. Sothern, Julia Marlowe, and James K. Hackett. It was a pleasure to be able to refer in terms of satisfaction to Mr. Hackett's *Macbeth* at the Aldwych Theatre. The American actor's impersonation is entitled to a place among the highest expositions of the part.

So much may be granted without conceding to Mr. Hackett the quality of greatness. There has been no great *Macbeth* in the sense that there have been undoubtedly a great *Hamlet* (Irving's) and a great *Othello* and *Richard III.* (Edmund Kean's). The character is so complex that it does not seem to lie within the power of a single temperament to realise all its conflicting elements. *Macbeth* is a poet and dreamer, valorous in battle, cowardly in crime, sensitive to honour, but a prey to conscience, and, in the last resort, when caught in the toils with his harness on his back, a man of the bulldog breed. How is it possible for any actor to realise in the flesh a character which can only be comprehensively visualised in the printed page?

Mr. Hackett brought to his baffling task a handsome, soldierly presence, a beautiful voice, admirable elocution and address. Outwardly, at least, few actors have been more completely equipped for the part. His most compelling attribute, the voice, was rich and deep. His accent was purely English.

If Mr. Hackett could have performed the part as powerfully as he had read it intelligently, he would be a great *Macbeth*. His reading, if I interpreted it correctly, was that of a brave warrior hustled into crime. He paid heed to the text:—

For brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name),
Disdaining fortune, with his brandished steel,
Which smoked with bloody execution.

Therefore, his Macbeth was always the soldier ; tall, erect, challenging and strikingly picturesque in his blood-red hair and beard.

From such a Macbeth one was led at first sight to expect a rousing performance in the grand manner. That was not Mr. Hackett's way. He obtained his finest effects in the soliloquies. His organ tones were melodiously attuned to the subtlest poetry. He was far more matter-of-fact than declamatory. The test of every Macbeth is the murder scene. Kean failed in all else but that. There, says Hazlitt, "his agony and tears, the force of nature overcome by passion, beggared description." We saw no agony and tears in the Macbeth of Mr. Hackett. His most impressive moment was an awesome whisper, "I've done the deed. Did'st thou not hear a noise ?"

So the American Macbeth satisfied the intellect without electrifying the senses. The production of the play was sound, especially in its effects of solid masonry, but there were too many cramped interior scenes and no vistas of spacious heath, such as Irving gave us at the Lyceum. There was much unnecessary music, particularly in the preludes, which retarded the opening of every act.

The Lady Macbeth of Mrs. Patrick Campbell was probably a meritorious effort twenty-three years ago, but even then it could hardly have been Shakespearean.

Incidentally, the Aldwych "Macbeth" raised again the question as to how the ghost of Banquo should be presented in the banquet scene. In the Hackett revival the spirit was visible in the shape of a quivering green light on the back of a chair. A few actors—John Philip Kemble, for example—have left the ghost wholly to the imagination, as the dagger is in the passage, "Is this a dagger which I see before me ?" Tree, in his marvellous spectacular revival at His Majesty's, submitted a thorough-going ghost which appeared at the back of Macbeth's chair, and stalked all round the stage behind transparent tapestries.

It is impossible to disagree with either method. Kemble could have cited Lady Macbeth's soothing words to her

lord, "This is the airdrawn dagger which you said led you to Duncan. . . . When all's done, you look but on a stool." Tree could have quoted the stage direction :—

"The Ghost of Banquo enters, and sits in Macbeth's place."

Mr. Hackett's ineffective blob of green light accorded with neither of those textual indications.

* * * * *

After the *première* of "Macbeth" the Aldwych management issued a Press list of distinguished people present at the performance. It was an interesting compilation, for Mr. Hackett had an audience of celebrities. It reminded me of Henry Irving's Press list on the night of his Lyceum revival of "Macbeth," December 29th, 1888. That list contained (among many others) the following names :—Sir Edward Clarke, Sir Morell Mackenzie, Lady Dorothy Nevill, Sir John Monckton, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Wilde, Miss Genevieve Ward, Mrs. Keeley, Mr. Pinero, Mr. Bancroft, Mr. and Mrs. D'Oyly Carte, Mr. Lockwood, Q.C., Mr. F. C. Burnand, Mr. W. S. Gilbert, Mr. H. A. Jones, Mr. C. Dickens, Mr. Val Prinsep, Mr. Linley Sambourne, Mr. J. Comyns Carr.

Irving's manager, the late Bram Stoker, used to tell a funny story about "Macbeth." The tragedy was being given, he said, in the Queen's Theatre, Dublin, and when the actor who played Lennox came to the lines :

"The night has been unruly : where we lay,
Our chimney was blown down. . . ."

he spoke them in the very worst of Dublin accents, as follows :—

"The night hath been rumbunctious where we slep,
Our chimbleys was blew down."

SLEEP-WALKING REALISM.

A new and completely successful reading of Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking scene was given by Miss Esmé Beringer at a Shakespeare matinée at the Garrick Theatre.

This Lady Macbeth really did convey the impression of being deeply asleep even while she walked and talked.

Her pallid features were rigidly impassive. The eyes

stared dully into vacancy. A laboured, stertorous breathing, almost amounting to a protracted snore, lent conviction to the impression that Lady Macbeth was actually unconscious of her movements and utterances.

The effect was uncanny. Miss Beringer's performance was ordinarily meritorious in other respects, but the realism of her sleep-walking is unforgettable.

I asked the actress if the interpretation was entirely original.

"I have been studying the part for a year," said Miss Beringer, "and three months ago while rehearsing before a mirror, the idea came to me like a flash of lightning. I had been feeling that some sort of tonal accompaniment or colouring was needed to enhance the illusion of sleep, so I experimented with heavy nasal breathing, and found that it realised my conception exactly.

"Although I have performed a good deal in Shakespeare, I have never played Lady Macbeth until to-day, and I have only once seen it performed—by Mrs. Patrick Campbell to Mr. Hackett's Macbeth."

LANG AND BOURCHIER AS OTHELLO AND IAGO.

Shakespeare's "Othello" was finely revived at the New Theatre. Nothing was wanting in a memorable revival except really great acting and the divine spark of inspiration. The tragedy had a beautiful setting, and the version employed omitted no details of consequence, while it included a number of episodes not usually presented. Othello was played with exceptional power by Mr. Matheson Lang and Iago with fascinating subtlety by Mr. Arthur Bourchier. Every character had an adequate exponent. Such a revival almost—not quite—"made history."

Mr. Lang's Othello, gorgeously accoutred in the military scenes, was physically a magnificent embodiment of the role. The actor's expressive eyes blazed in a complexion almost black, and he wore long raven hair falling straight and lank to the neck. His tall, proud figure swept the stage in the moments of dramatic grandeur. His strong, resonant voice, slightly marred by a harsh intake of the breath, was equal to every declamatory demand. The performance compelled sympathy, pity, admiration. It just fell short of imparting the thrill that can only be conveyed by a magnetic personality.

The new Othello had several individual excellences. Mr. Lang restored Othello's two epileptic fits, which Garrick and Irving made so dreadfully impressive. They are clearly in keeping with the text, and their customary omission is unaccountable. The second seizure, with Iago standing, arms folded, grinning gleefully over Othello's writhing form, was grippingly effective. Othello's anguished outbursts and railings against Desdemona, especially the "I'll tear her all to pieces" passage, were splendid. So were his hysterical laughter after the strangling of Desdemona and his awful whispered speech: "She's dead—still as the grave!" An Othello, all things considered, of ripe fulfilment.

Mr. Bourchier's Iago was truly a "demi-devil." He realised Shakespeare's description in his Mephistophelian make-up and red attire. He was a laughing, grinning, mouthing, spitting Iago. The inward savagery of the character was skilfully separated from its outward show of affability and spurious honesty. In facial expression and diction the performance was extraordinarily arresting. Hatred and malignity alternated with mocking suavity in swift, ferocious flashes of address and utterance. The outstanding defect of the impersonation was beyond the actor's control. Despite a clever make-up, Mr. Bourchier's appearance suggested a too comfortable Iago. His age and seeming were obviously not the poet's "four times seven years."

NEARLY A GREAT OTHELLO.

Godfrey Tearle is nearly a great Othello. His performance at the Court Theatre placed him on a level with all the modern exponents of the part. He only lacked the domination of overwhelming personality—the vital spark of genius. Even that may come. In all other respects he was veritably the noble Moor. He looked the character perfectly. He was tall, handsome, olive-complexioned, black-haired, with close-cropped beard and moustache, flashing eyes, gleaming teeth, a voice attunable to every note and cadence of the musical verse, and features "variable as the shade by the light quivering aspen made."

The voice, perhaps, was his best asset. In Othello's gentler moods—the speech to the Senate and "Oh, Iago, the pity of it!"—it rang as purely and sweetly as Forbes-Robert-

son's. Articulation, enunciation, were delightful. There were no elocutionary irritants, such as a laboured breathing or a muffling of the sibilants. Even at the height of Othello's fury, when his passion is epileptic, every word could be heard.

Mr. Tearle, therefore, gave beautiful expression to Othello's emotion. What of his agony? There he had at least one moment unapproached by any of the dozen or so Othellos I have seen. It was when Othello's heart had turned to stone; he struck it, and it hurt his hand.

What of his rage? It was tremendous. The words ground in his teeth. He growled like an anguished animal. He roared—but he never ranted. He screamed—“Villain!” “Devil!”—and leapt, swift as a panther, at his tormentor's throat. In the revulsion of feeling after Desdemona's murder his pathos went to the heart. The shrill cry, “I have no wife!” electrified the listeners.

A fine, a splendid Othello—an Othello nearly great.

Mr. Basil Rathbone as Iago had a disconcerting mannerism which may have been due to first-night nervousness. He smacked his lips at the beginning of every sentence. Otherwise he was a sound Iago, but a trifle finicking.

A SOFT PEDAL OTHELLO.

Othello, as well as Desdemona, was assassinated at the Scala Theatre. There are various ways of murdering the noble Moor. Spranger Barry did it in a cocked hat and silk knee breeches. Charles Young, according to Hazlitt, spun round like a humming-top. Garrick had too little dignity and Macready too much. John Phillip Kemble employed a tortuous enunciation. Charles Matthews slew the Moor in one solitary performance—a light comedian's Othello. Irving, I regret to say it, but the fact is writ in history—was orally unintelligible.

Mr. F. J. Nettlefold, at the Scala, gave the Moor his quietus by grossly underacting the part. He looked it well enough, but he appeared to be temperamentally incapable of expressing Othello's passion. His smothering of Desdemona was enacted so genteelly that the gallery giggled and the pit guffawed. He stood as one benumbed or stricken while Desdemona descended on his “rolling eyes” and “shaking frame.”

He spoke the glorious verse in a suave monotone more appropriate to a cathedral than a theatre. Rarely, on the stage, has vaulting ambition more completely o'er-leaped itself and fallen on t'other side.

MOSCOVITCH'S SHYLOCK.

Maurice Moscovitch's Shylock, at the Court Theatre, was a powerful presentment of the role. It was not romantically powerful like Irving's, or nobly so, like Forbes-Robertson's, or diabolically so, like Edmund Kean's. The wonder lay in its uncompromising naturalism. His Shylock was not a Hebraic grotesque, with an antic disposition, but a live, credible being, human and unhuman—a plausible admixture of things evil and good.

This downright realism, however, constituted a drawback from the viewpoint of popular appreciation. The impersonation, inspired by cool reason rather than personal magnetism, was necessarily deficient in those airs of majesty or devilry which on historic occasions have taken the town by storm.

Mr. Moscovitch, who is a foreign Jew, has an accent, but his pronunciation did not distort our tongue. His voice was rich in timbre, carefully modulated, and varied in expression. He rarely declaimed, and he certainly never ranted. His gutturals and sibilants were powerfully employed in specific emotional scenes.

A gift of compelling laughter, unctuously ironic, was a facet of his art. He exercised it most effectively in the mocking speech, "Hath not a Jew eyes?" and in the scene with Tubal, where, in rapid alternations of passion, he rejoiced (even danced) over the news of his enemy Antonio's discomfiture, and in the next breath lamented the flight of his daughter Jessica. This masterly outburst of intermingling rage, vengeful humour and lachrymosity was a memorable moment in Moscovitch's Shylock.

Every Shylock stands or falls by the trial scene. Here Moscovitch had to contend against an apathetic representation of the episode by the other performers. On the first night, at any rate, the assembled characters displayed about as much interest as tailors' dummies would have shown in an event which should have been electric.

Apart from that defect, Moscovitch made the trial scene

superb. His picture of Shylock at the climax of his fate, foiled and baffled, in the toils of almost mortal anguish, was one of the finest things the London stage has presented within living memory.

Those observers who had the patience to suffer the Portia scenes in the Court revival were welcome to their forbearance, but I, for one, cannot respect them for their condonation of a wilful miscasting of a part on which half the magic of the play depends. Otherwise, the acting of characters subsidiary to Shylock was generally efficient.

In one instance, Mr. Miles Malleson's goblin-like Gobbo, we had a Shakespearean clown which has possibly never been equalled as an exposition of the comical-grotesque. Mr. Fagan's artistic dressing, staging, and lighting of the play were replete with a multitude of charms.

THE JEW THAT SHAKESPEARE DREW.

Stage history was made at the Duke of York's on March 22nd, 1920, when Louis Bouwmeester played Shylock for the first time in England. Bouwmeester's performance was a *tour de force* for a man of seventy-four. The veteran actor has been Holland's greatest tragedian for nearly half a century, and the morning after his *début* in London there were no two opinions among the London critics regarding his supreme qualities as an artist.

I discovered an instructive reference to Bouwmeester in an old "Theatre Magazine" of forty-two years ago. The Amsterdam correspondent of that periodical wrote under date February 10th, 1880:—

"Mr. Louis Bouwmeester has had a most singular career. For years and years he acted in a second or third-rate *théâtre de variétés*—a kind of Amsterdam music-hall—where he played all the first parts in the well-known productions of this theatre. Mr. Bouwmeester had, indeed, a lot of fervent admirers; but his fame was nearly confined to the rude walls of the smoky and narrow hole, to which entrance could be obtained for the magnificent sum of a shilling.

"But," continued the correspondent, "so richly endowed was the artist who now possesses the undisputed fame if being the first actor of the Dutch stage that the whole play-

going and critical world acknowledged in Bouwmeester an artist of unrivalled genius. His voice, especially in its lower range, is extremely musical, and has tones of a most touching pathos. His face is exceedingly and variously expressive. He represents with great force all kinds of passions. Rage and tenderness, scorn and despair, are at his immediate command."

So much for the Bouwmeester of forty-two years ago. Is it not strange that London should have had to wait until the close of his wonderful career for an actor of whom a celebrated French critic recently remarked, "Even his stick talks"?

The Jew this Dutchman drew at the Duke of York's may unhesitatingly be classed among the Shylocks of renown. Although Bouwmeester spoke his native language, his performance was almost completely understandable to an English audience familiar with Shakespeare's text. Shylock is usually represented, roughly speaking, in two ways: (1) as a monster of iniquity and the embodiment of revenge; or (2) as a hounded victim, more sinned against than sinning. There was a third way, that of the pre-Macklin actors, now generally discarded—the comic, Elizabethan Shylock, with a red wig. Bouwmeester's portrayal took the first form—the monster of iniquity, the incarnation of revenge.

He gave a marvellous presentment of the character on those uncompromising lines. This Shylock lusted for his enemy's blood. His gnarled fingers quivered for his pound of flesh. His deep-set eyes blazed and his guttural voice croaked as he crouched, knife in hand, ready to spring at Antonio. That was the actor's greatest moment, but the famous exit after the court scene was almost equally impressive. He staggered from the court, broken and dishevelled, laughing horribly.

Devilish vindictiveness was the keynote of this astounding Shylock. Except for a single tender scene with Jessica, the actor based his impersonation solely on Shylock's cruelty and malignity. There was no hint of the whitewashing process. This Shylock was the devil incarnate—raging, spluttering, hissing—consumed with a passion for revenge, and, in his defeat, beating his breast in torment.

The trial scene, in that amazing manner, was wonderful. Shylock had a great moment when, flourishing

his knife, and licking his lips in gleeful anticipation, he crouched towards his victim. His revulsion of feeling after Portia's "Tarry, Jew," was startlingly expressed. The exit, in an agony of laughter, was superb.

Mr. Bouwmeester achieved these fine results without a suspicion of rant. Although this Shylock came from Holland it had no neutral tints. It was painted in a primary colour—"seeing red."

Bouwmeester's Shylock, therefore, was a fiend in human shape. There was nothing in it of majesty or sublimity. Who will dare to quarrel with his conception? The Irvingites, perhaps. Irving made Shylock sympathetic, but the fact may not be sufficiently familiar that in later years he reconsidered his interpretation. A blind man heard him play the part at Boston, U.S.A. "I was disappointed," he said to Irving. "Shylock is a usurer and a hard man. I missed the hard, raucous tones that a man of that character would have in his voice. I heard only the voice of my kind friend."

Irving, thereafter, hardened his reading of Shylock.

I wish I could say that Bouwmeester took London by storm. Unfortunately, this is not the golden hour of Melpomene. It is an after-dinner public which for the most part crowds our theatres, and the art of the legitimate player is degraded to the level of the musical glasses. If a Sybil Thorndike emerges from the ruck of mediocrity, she has to be crammed, so to speak, down the public's throat. Oh, yes! Melpomene can have a theatre—at a price! The profiteer-renter confronts her at every turn, so she gathers her robes about her and seeks refuge in a hospitable music-hall.*

An extraordinary thing about Bouwmeester was that London, which should be the world-centre of the arts, had not, in a general sense, even heard his name before. On the Continent he is classed with the greatest modern players. The leading Parisian critics acclaimed him to the skies, and contemporary French actors hailed him as their "master"—not metaphorically, but literally, in that actual term.

CALIBAN ACCORDING TO CALVERT.

Remarkable new readings of Prospero and Caliban by Mr. Henry Ainley and Mr. Louis Calvert in Miss Viola Tree's

* See *Apotheosis of the Music-Hall*, page 66.

revival of "The Tempest" at the Aldwych attracted surprisingly little attention.

Prospero hitherto had been presented as a somewhat patriarchal person, with flowing hair, a full beard, and a long drooping moustache. Mr. Ainley's Prospero was clean-shaven with a high forehead. The features resembled those of the bust of Shakespeare in Trinity Church, or the Chandos bust of the Bard, save for the small upturned moustache and tufted beard.

The parallel between Prospero and Shakespeare drawn by Mr. Ainley was pleasant to contemplate. "The Tempest" was probably Shakespeare's last play. Like Prospero when the curtain falls, Shakespeare is breaking his magic wand. In Prospero's words, we seem to hear him saying:—

Graves, at my command,
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let them forth
By my so potent art. But this rough magic
I here abjure. . . . I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book.

Caliban hitherto had been presented more as a monster than as a human being. Sir Herbert Tree's was the last of a line of traditional stage monsters answering to the name of Caliban. Tree's Caliban was a man-ape. A mane of red hair flowed below the waistline. His body appeared to be nude, except for a vegetal loin covering, and the skin was excessively hairy. The hands were like claws, with nails inches long. Instead of teeth the creature had two protruding tusks.

Mr. Calvert's Caliban was not noticeably deformed or particularly non-human. He would have passed in the tropics for an ordinarily ugly black man. He was reminiscent of Kipling's Fuzzy Wuzzy, with 'is 'ayrick 'ead of 'air.

There is no justification for Mr. Calvert's absurdly human Caliban beyond the poetic language spoken by the character. The name of Caliban would not be a by-word, a synonym for brutality, if all the stage Calibans had been akin to Mr. Calvert's whitewash conception.

Caliban (the name is an anagram of cannibal) was more a quadruped than a man. He is repeatedly referred to in the text, always in terms of loathing, as a "monster." Prospero

says he is "disproportioned," a "mis-shapen knave." He addresses him as "thou tortoise." Trinculo, when he sees him, asks, "What have we here, a man or a fish? He smells like a fish." Antonio also refers to him contemptuously as a fish. Prospero threatens to make him roar until beasts tremble at his din. Caliban himself says that with his long nails he can dig up pea-nuts.

So much for Shakespeare's clear instructions. Outside the book, every Shakespearean authority, prior to Mr. Calvert, has agreed on the essential point that Caliban is less man than monster. Schlegel epitomises all their views of the character in his description of Caliban as "a mixture of gnome and savage, half *dæmon*, half brute."

THE IDEAL "GENTLE BRUTUS."

Shakespeare's immortal story of the murder of "the noblest man that ever lived in the tide of times," Julius Cæsar, was admirably re-told at the St. James's during the management of Mr. Gilbert Miller. The revival was chiefly remarkable for its lovely setting and for Mr. Ainley's and Mr. Basil Gill's noble performances of Mark Antony and Brutus. The setting was a triumph for the designer and producer, Mr. Stanley Bell. Mr. Bell succeeded in being artistic in the modern sense without affecting the "artiness" of the ultra-modern producers. The scenic treatment was chastely beautiful and rich in colour, with a pleasing suggestion of severity.

In the Forum, the rostrum from which Antony roused the mob to a frenzied revulsion of feeling against Cæsar's assassins was erected in the centre of the scene, directly confronting the audience, and Mr. Ainley made a striking figure in his scarlet and white robes as he declaimed the thrilling oration. The battle episodes in Brutus' tent and on the plains of Philippi were replete with martial splendour, and there was a touch of poetic inspiration in the falling of the curtain on an empty stage after Brutus' body had been borne away by Antony's conquering hosts.

Mr. Ainley gave admirable expression to "that quick spirit which is in Antony." Mr. Gill was the ideal "gentle Brutus," and his success was shared by Miss Lilian Braithwaite—a perfect Portia.

An amusing speech by Mr. Ainley brought a memorable

performance to a laughing conclusion. The actor sang the following ribald verse which he heard one of the carpenters singing under the stage :—

O, Julius C. was an N.U.T.
And a rare old cockalorum,
Brutus it was that stabbèd him
In a place that's called the forum ;
Marc Antony sarcastically
Said unto him, How dare he ?
And Brutus he died
Of suicide
With a sword in his little Mary.

SANITY AND SHAKESPEARE.

James Bernard Fagan is our sanest producer of Shakespeare. An Old Bensonian himself, he is steeped in the stage traditions of the national poet. He steers a straight course between the Scylla of convention and the Charybdis of eccentricity ; the eccentricity of impressionism, futurism, cubism, and all the fantastic ephemera of the day. Yet he is not blind to such virtues as the "isms" possess. Here and there in his productions at the Court Theatre he does not disdain an effect of drapery or design peculiar to the modernists of the schools of Craig and Barker.

"King Henry IV. : Part II.," at the Court Theatre, was characteristically Fagan. Its scenery was adequate, but beautiful. The action was swift, but never hurried. The "cuts," which were bound to be decried by somebody, were as judicious as their inevitability allows. The acting was unsurpassed at the time for all-round Shakespearean excellence.

Part II. may not be a good play in a narrative sense. It is, however, rich in buffoonery redolent of the period. Its portraits of kings, prince, and noblemen are finely drawn. It contains one episode of supreme dignity—the death of Henry IV. after Prince Hal had abstracted his crown. It also contains a jewel of poetry, the King's invocation to Sleep, as well as such lines, familiar in all men's mouths, as "Un-easy lies the head that wears a crown," "With all appliances and means to boot." "Thy wish was father, Harry, to the

thought," and "Under which king, Bezonian? Speak, or die!"

Falstaff, in Part II., is a lesser figure intellectually than in Part I. He is not so full of those "stupendous unveracities." He has one foot in the grave, and his spirit is accordingly diminished. Even so, he is still rare Jack Falstaff, that swoln parcel of dropsies. We saw him in his cups with Mistress Quickly and Doll Tearsheet (who were played with immense abandon by Miss Margaret Yarde and Miss Leah Bateman), and we grieved with him when his whilom companion-roysterer, Prince Hal, spurns him on his accession to the throne with the words, "How ill white hairs become a fool and jester." Many of us who love plump Jack can scarcely find it in our hearts to forgive Will Shakespeare for that seemingly heartless affront.

After the fruity Falstaff of Beerbohm Tree (in Part I., as well as in the "Merry Wives") any contemporary player of the part has to contend against an insuperable tradition. Mr. Alfred Clark, at the Court, also had the disadvantage of stature below the average height. Nevertheless, he was a capital pocket Falstaff. The intention of the part was clearly conveyed in mood, accent, and manner. If there was one histrionic triumph more than another in a cast which put team-work on a pedestal it was Mr. H. O. Nicholson's Shallow. Every lover of character-acting should have hastened to the Court, if only to enjoy Mr. Nicholson's finished portrayal.

AT THE GOOD OLD VIC. *

I sat entranced at the Royal Victoria Hall during its revival of "Pericles," which had not been done in London since 1854. Only a little fluffiness among the minor performances differentiated Mr. Robert Atkins' production of the play from the completeness associated with West End theatres. The term "transpontine drama" formerly implied a sneer. Nowadays one may enjoy some of the finest acting at the Old Vic over the bridge.

George the Third said to Fanny Burney, "Was there ever such stuff as much of Shakespeare? . . . only, of course, one

* Another rarely acted play of Shakespeare, "All's Well That Ends Well," was revived at the Royal Victoria Hall, on November 28, 1921. This was the Old Vic's thirtieth Shakespeare production since 1914. "All's Well" had not been popularly presented on the London stage since Samuel Phelps' revival at Sadler's Wells in 1852.

must not say so." Some of the stuff derided by the Farmer King exists in "Pericles." Shakespeare's hand does not become apparent until the fourth act. The terrible scenes in a disorderly house in Mitylene are undoubtedly his. The poet's familiarity with the dark side of Old London is revealed in other plays to an extent that warrants this assumption.

Those scenes were the sensational feature of the Old Vic revival. They were spoken unreservedly, and were splendidly performed. The effect was not disgusting. On the contrary, the heroine Marina's victory over her foul environment and the scathing words she utters, left the onlooker exultant. The episodes, moreover, were pictorially Hogarthian. There was much to admire in the whole scenic presentment, with its simple but satisfying setting of black draperies, white columns and colourful costumes.

The team-work in "Pericles" compelled enthusiasm. No wonder the Old Vic company was invited by the Belgian Government to Brussels. Mr. Wilfrid Walter, doubling the parts of Cerimon and Antiochus, spoke the verse most beautifully. Half-a-dozen other actors did the same, including Mr. Atkins as the quizzically confidential Chorus, old Gower. The Thaisa and Marina, Miss Jane Bacon and Miss Mary Summer, were fragrantly Shakespearean, and I shall never forget the lovely picture of Miss Nellie Robson posing as the silvery goddess Diana in her temple at Ephesus.

* * * * *

Advocates of "reserved force" should have seen "Coriolanus" at the Old Vic. There they would have beheld an audience roused to wild enthusiasm by the straight-from-the-shoulder acting of Mr. Charles Warburton as Coriolanus and Miss Genevieve Ward as Volumnia. Every inflexion of the players' voices reached the remotest part of the spacious auditorium. Miss Ward's performance at the age of eighty-three was one of the most wonderful achievements, physical and intellectual, ever witnessed in the theatre. The tragedy, to be convincing, should be done at Covent Garden or Drury Lane, with a Roman mob of at least two hundred men, women and children—the number employed by Kemble. In Macready's revival nearly two hundred senators alone, in addition to the mob, appeared on the stage. If Mr. Cochran wishes to do something really big (and artistic) he should consider the possibilities of "Coriolanus."

WOMAN AS FALSTAFF !

Sixteen of the twenty speaking parts in "The Merry Wives of Windsor" are male characters, and they were all acted by women and girls in a charity production of the play at the Court Theatre.

Numerous actresses have played Hamlet and Romeo. One has even attempted Henry V.; but a woman Falstaff seems a preposterous proposition.

Miss Olga Slade's Falstaff did not lessen the innate absurdity of the idea. Padding and make-up enabled her to look the part, and her voice might have passed in a crowd for a man's, but the spirit of Falstaff did not inhabit the frame.

Miss Marie Slade cracked the whip of Master Ford to better purpose. She gave an assumption of masculinity that would have deceived a casual onlooker, and her acting was good within limitations. Pistol, Nym, Bardolph, and Dr. Caius were cleverly made up, but all their speeches betrayed them. These freak performances of Shakespeare are enough to make the poet turn in his grave.

"HENRY V." IN DOUBLE QUICK TIME.

"Thus with imagined wing our swift scene flies," said Chorus in a revival of "King Henry the Fifth" at the Strand Theatre. Chorus was right. The New Shakespeare Company did not dally an instant. They performed the lengthy chronicle play in its entirety in less than three hours—"small time," as Chorus again observed, "but in that small most greatly lived this star of England." Only one short interval divided the nineteen scenes. Except for a few full-stage sets the episodes were presented in panel form between sliding curtains. The play, to modern eyes, is essentially a spectacular work, and therefore none too amenable to such treatment; yet the total effect was pictorial. Mr. Bridges-Adams, the producer, proved that Shakespeare can be adapted to contemporary conditions of time and temper without sacrifice of artistry.

Mr. Murray Carrington was a manly and lovable King Harry. He delivered the rousing battle speeches boldly. His prayer on St. Crispin's Day was impressively spoken. He did not indulge in point-making, and the tender aspects of the character were charmingly expressed.

IRVING'S GRAND-DAUGHTER'S DEBUT.

A Shakespeare play has rarely been given a choicer setting than "A Midsummer Night's Dream" received at the Court Theatre at the hands of Mr. James Bernard Fagan. There have been many more ambitious productions of the "Dream" (as it is rather affectionately termed by actors and actresses), notably those, in recent years, of Sir Herbert Tree at His Majesty's, Mr. Granville Barker at the Savoy, and Messrs. Asche and Stuart at the Adelphi; but the Fagan revival withstood comparison with them all.

[By the way, that managerial banner-bearer of Shakespeare had waved a magician's wand over the old "Theatre of the Intellectuals," as the Court was styled in its Vedrenne-Barker days. The formerly dingy playhouse is now one of the most delightful in England. The diffused lighting from invisible electric lamps sheds a soft radiance over the audience, who appear to be revelling in the glamour of a warm autumnal day.]

Of the representation as a whole its true intent was all for our delight. Mr. Fagan did not overload it with embroideries and fripperies. We were satisfied, not sated. There were no gilded fairies, no futurism or cubism, nothing odd or freakish. For which relief much thanks!

The new musical accompaniment, by John Greenwood, was charming and unobtrusive. A latter-day tendency to convert our greatest fairy play into something suspiciously akin to a musical comedy found no favour at the Court. It is true that Miss Mary Grey,* a charming Oberon, sang snatches of poetry which should really be spoken, but she sang them well. Apart from that unnecessary embellishment, the intrinsically musical text was allowed to speak for itself.

There were no surprises in the performance. Every part was adequately and pleasingly played. The Athenian clowns were particularly good—especially Mr. Alfred Clark, a soundly humorous Bottom, and Mr. Miles Malleson, a quaintly nippy Quince. The Puck, Miss Iris Hawkins, gambolled with a truly elfin relish. The Titania, Miss Elizabeth Irving, looked the part perfectly. She is a tall, graceful brunette

* See page 191.

with a strong speaking voice and refined accent. Her success was pronounced. Henry Irving's grand-daughter proved that there is something in a name.

"THE LOVELY GARNISH OF A BOY."

Shakespeare's war-time banishment from the West End stage was terminated when Mr. James Bernard Fagan, foreseeing the inevitable reaction against the glut of tomfoolery with which playgoers had been sated, boldly took the managerial bull by the horns at the Court Theatre, and, greatly daring, produced one of the finest comedies in the language : "Twelfth Night ; or, What You Will."

There were no new-fangled German-art ideas to mar this welcome revival—no Nurembergian toy landscapes or futuristic "art" effects. The scenic scheme, by Victor Maclure, was beautiful and novel without a hint of eccentricity, and the costumes, though traditional, were always a feast to the eye. The acting aimed at nothing more exalted than a general level of excellence. Every part was played delightfully, none indifferently.

There could be nothing but praise for the capable new Malvolio of Mr. Herbert Waring, the amusingly vivacious Sir Toby Belch of Mr. Arthur Whitby, and the broadly Shakespearean sea captain of Mr. Alfred Brydone. A new Viola, Miss Leah Bateman, charmingly became her "lovely garnish of a boy." Mr. Edgar Stevens, as the Clown, sang divinely, "O Mistress Mine" and the other immortal melodies.

THE GREATEST WAR PLAY.

A war play, written not for a day or an era, but for all time—Euripides' "The Trojan Women"—was greatly presented at the Old Vic. The tragedy is 2,334 years old, but its message is eternal, and its note of human grief sounded as poignantly at the Old Vic in 1920 as it did in the Grecian theatre centuries before Christ.

That message, in the words of Professor Gilbert Murray's scholarly translation, is this :—

Would ye be wise, ye cities, fly from war,
Yet, if war comes, there is a crown in death
For her that striveth well and perisheth
Unstained.

“The last dead deep of misery” was plumbed in the performance at the Old Vic. It pictured the fall of Troy in a continuous wail of anguish, a melodious dirge, uttered by a group of Trojan heroines led by majestic Hecuba, widowed Andromache, and raving Cassandra. The burden of frenzied woe was depicted as unbearable even by the conquerors, thereby doubly enforcing the poet’s injunction, “Would ye be wise, ye cities, fly from war!”

The phrase “transpontine drama” spelled not long ago all that was blood-and-thundery. Nowadays, the Old Vic over the bridge is one of the few theatres in London where the dramatic classics are regularly revived. The Old Vic’s presentation of the “*Troades*” was a wonderful thing to see in the erstwhile haunt of “*Maria Martin*” and “*Sweeney Todd*.”

Transpontine drama proved to be a synonym, on this occasion, for lovely words exquisitely spoken amid artistic effects of dressing, lighting, and deportment. The colour scheme alone—in costumes and draperies—would have done credit to any West End stage.

The acting was similarly remarkable. Professor Murray’s rhymed verse and resounding decasyllabics were thrillingly declaimed.

Miss Sybil Thorndike, as Hecuba, was a tragedy queen indeed. Her performance ranked in dignity of delivery and nobility of mien with Genevieve Ward’s Margaret and Lady Macbeth. The actress seemed born for Hecuba, and her transition from the role to that of the girl-heroine at Drury Lane in the evening of the same day constituted almost a freakish exhibition of versatility. Her Lady Macbeth at a West End theatre is obviously on the knees of the gods.

APOTHEOSIS OF THE MUSIC-HALL.

A great piece of tragic acting was given on the stage of the Holborn Empire, where twice nightly Dale and O’Malley were cross-talking and Harry Tate was “Fishing.” After her performance of Medea, Miss Sybil Thorndike would have been justified in exclaiming, with Euripides’ anguished heroine, “My foot is on the mountain’s brow!” Her Medea is a near approach to histrionic greatness. An English actress has arisen at last who is worthy to be placed with Ristori.

It was a heartening thing to see in a music-hall a tragedy which was originally produced twenty-four centuries ago—

in 491 B.C. The experience was made possible by the beautiful translation, largely in rhymed verse, by Professor Gilbert Murray. Euripides' humanity, like Shakespeare's, is for all time. His work seemed as modern as anything in Shakespeare, while the verse—as rendered by Professor Murray—bore comparison, especially in the choric odes, with the loveliest passages of our British bard.

Medea, the royal witch of Colchis, murdered her brother and her two little sons for hate of her husband, Jason, who had discarded her for a younger wife. She also slew the bride and the bride's old father—those victims dying in the raging torment of a magic poison. Yet Medea loved her children, Jason's sons, and she suffered mentally the tortures of the damned in the throes of her awful resolve.

It was in the realisation of Medea's suffering that Miss Thorndike revealed herself an actress of extraordinary attainment. She reached an ecstasy of anguish in the line: "I gnash my teeth thinking of what a path my feet must tread. . . . O rise and gird thine armour on, my heart! Take up thy sword, this poor right hand of mine!" There was unutterable pathos in her "wailing borne of a lost delight." Her passion gave equally fine expression to Medea's "uncontrollable, tempestuous spirit, blent with wrongs." Miss Thorndike bore herself majestically in Medea's cerise-coloured robes. In facial and gestural artistry, in utterance and demeanour she was a veritable tragedy queen.

The Messenger who related the terrible story of the bride's death in torment was powerfully played by Mr. Lewis Casson. His long speech was a notable elocutionary achievement. The Chorus of Corinthian Women had many individual excellences of mien and delivery. The staging of a chastely simple Corinthian exterior scene (before the house of Medea) and the colouring and lighting effects were all glowingly artistic. It is a curious commentary on the conditions prevailing in the regular London theatres that one of the most inspiring stage performances given within living memory was witnessed in a twice-nightly music-hall!

DE MAX AS ORESTES.

Greek tragedy in a revue! Orestes on the heel of Nelson Keys! That was the incongruous but artistic attraction presented by Mr. Cochran at the London Pavilion.

Mr. Keys, as a choleric invalid, had only just spluttered off the stage in the Brighton scene of "London, Paris, and New York" when the curtain rose on a classic setting of purple draperies, flanked by high stone columns and furnished with a dais covered with leopards' skins. It was the fifth act of Racine's "Andromaque." The eminent French tragedian, Edouard de Max, performed Orestes.

M. de Max has a noble presence, a leonine cast of countenance, and a deep, vibrant voice capable of running the gamut of emotional expression. On the dais, in his white robes, with arms extended, his hair dishevelled, his eyes burning, he declaimed the musical verse superbly.

Orestes was going mad. He had killed King Pyrrhus at the exhortation of Hermione, Orestes' former betrothed. Hermione loved Pyrrhus, but the king rejected her. She promised Orestes to renew their betrothal if he avenged her outraged pride.

When the deed was done. Hermione turned like a tigress on Orestes. She upbraided him and spurned him.

"My heart," she said, "belied whatever words I spoke."

Orestes saw red. He raved in his agony. "'Tis blood! Streams of red blood all around me." The madman fell prostrate as the curtain slowly descended.

The actor, exhausted by the passion of the scene, bowed to a storm of applause.

THE FIRST BURLESQUE.

The Sacred Lamp of Burlesque, as it was styled in the palmy days of that now neglected form of entertainment, was re-lighted in Beaumont and Fletcher's "Knight of the Burning Pestle," at the Kingsway Theatre.

Burlesque was in its halcyon days between 1831 and 1885. In the first part of that period, its prime exponents were Planché, Gilbert à Beckett, Mark Lemon and Talfourd. In the second, the ministers of mirth included F. C. Burnand, H. J. Byron, W. S. Gilbert, Robert Reece, and H. B. Farnie. After the 'eighties, it continued to flourish in a newer guise, chiefly at the Old Gaiety, the most popular authors being Sims and Pettitt, "Pot" Stephens, Yardley, "A. C. Torr," and "Richard Henry."

John Hollingshead and George Edwardes, producers of the newer burlesque, kept the Lamp alight assiduously. Plenty

of old-stagers are alive to recall the triumphs, under the banners of those and other managers, of such great burlesque artists as Edward Terry, Fred Leslie, Nellie Farren, E. J. Llonnen, E. W. Royce, Harry Monkhouse, Kate Vaughan, Willie Edouin, Florence St. John and Edmund Payne—to mention only a few whose names readily come to mind.

“The Knight of the Burning Pestle” lit the Lamp in 1611. I did not agree with the extravagant laudation which was meted out to the play itself in connection with the Kingsway revival.

That production was fascinating as a curiosity. The stage effects, the old-time atmosphere so lovingly reproduced by Mr. Nigel Playfair, were extraordinarily interesting to erudite lovers of the Drama. But, apart from those attractions (and the admirable work of the performers) the humour of the old burlesque was largely beyond the comprehension of modern audiences. Take, for example, Merrythought’s snatches of song. Their wording, for the most part, is meaningless to modern ears.

Moreover, being a burlesque, the piece teems with topical allusions of the Jacobean period, all caviare at the Kingsway. How many, even of the eclectic first-nighters, knew, for instance, that Ralph’s remark about “selling mithridatum and dragon’s water to visited houses” was an allusion to houses visited by the plague? Archaisms of that description punctuate the dialogue at every turn. They are not understood of the people; and dramatic students were not numerous enough to fill the Kingsway.

Mr. Playfair’s valuable stage setting made me long to see Shakespeare staged in a similar way by the same producer. The period of the piece is Jacobean, but the setting formed an attractive reproduction, on general principles, of the Elizabethan stage. It would be no new thing, of course, for the present generation to see Shakespeare’s plays presented as the author intended them to be, but previous experiments in that direction have not usually been available to the general public. There is constant talk of the establishment of a permanent Shakespeare theatre. Surely, when that institution materialises, it should take the form of a replica of the first Globe Theatre—the “Wooden O” of the prologue to “Henry V.”

The Kingsway stage for Beaumont and Fletcher’s play

was continued into the auditorium by means of a roofing to the orchestra well. Up-stage, centre, was a miniature stage with pictorial sliding tableau curtains. Above its proscenium was an open loft, occupied by a small but choice orchestra, discoursing tuneful new music to the piece, composed by Frederic Austin. The colouring of the setting and of the players' costumes was very bright, in keeping with the whole joyous conception.

The play itself is a forerunner of the modern revue. In lieu of *compère* and *commère*, we had a London citizen (a grocer) and his wife, who, after interrupting the prologue from the stalls, jumped on the stage and sat among the gallants beside the proscenium, applauding and occasionally deriding the performers, as they did in Shakespeare's time. Mr. and Mrs. Citizen were amusingly obsessed by the antics of the principal performer, Ralph, who happened to be their apprentice.

Ralph, the Knight of the Burning Pestle, is a Jacobean Don Quixote, and his fellow apprentices, Tim and George, are his trusty squire and dwarf. Cervantes' satire had just been published in England, and Beaumont and Fletcher were parodying it in their burlesque. They were also guying the martial proclivities of the London citizens. Those motives necessitated topical allusions which are Greek to modern audiences, and for that reason, I regret to say, some of the humour missed fire at the Kingsway. Sufficient remained to make the entertainment thoroughly amusing to the average onlooker. To theatrical connoisseurs, in spite of occasional *longueurs*, its attractions were irresistible.

AN ELIZABETHAN SHOCKER.

Despite the many enchanting lines in John Webster's "Duches of Malfi," the revival of that play by the Phoenix Society at Hammersmith went far to support a prevalent contention that the so-called greatness of the general run of Elizabethan dramas is a literary fetish. Detached passages in the "Duchess" are worthy of immortality, but the play as a whole, apart from its infrequent scintillations of philosophy, is little better than a "Maria Martin" or a "Sweeney Todd."

It crumbles to bits before the modern sense of the ridiculous. Webster's process of heaping agony on agony, like Ossa on

Pelion, results in a toppling over of the structure and a ludicrous collapse. The spectacle of a stage littered with bodies—a carnival of carnage—engenders laughter instead of terror.

As a stage curio, the thing is well worth doing once in a generation. The Phœnix Society did it very well indeed. It was instructive as well as interesting to see the things that passed for horrors in the mediæval theatre—the torturing of the duchess with lunatics capering around her; with a dead man's severed hand placed in hers in the dark; with the sight of a waxen image purporting to be her lover's body, and, finally, her strangulation before the audience by executioners in masks.

Those are by no means all the tragedies in this Elizabethan "blood bath." They are succeeded by a series of assassinations, poisonings, and mortal combats among the duchess' murderers; and the stage nightmare concludes with the bodies of four murderers in a heap. The play was well produced in an all-black interior relieved by significant touches of crimson.

The performance, good all round, will be remembered for Miss Cathleen Nesbitt's sympathetic and often impressive acting as the duchess.

"THE MAIDS TRAGEDIE."

If the general public could attend a "run" of the fine old Elizabethan play, "The Maids Tragedie," as it was presented by the Phœnix Society, the world record of "Chu Chin Chow" would be smashed.

The amazingly outspoken dialogue of Beaumont and Fletcher in this play had not been delivered on the English stage for nearly two hundred years. It was given in this revival absolutely unbawdlerised, and even the Phœnix Society gasped. The action, too, was performed in its entirety.

"The Maids Tragedie," if played before the right sort of audience by the right kind of actors, would engender no unworthy thoughts. The writing of the play has, on the contrary, much of that divine afflatus which exalts the imagination.

All the talented players engaged in the revival were splendid. Miss Sybil Thorndike rose to supreme heights of anguish as Evadne—the wretched woman who, to convenience her paramour, the King, married a courtier, and by so doing glutted the maw of Death.

"RARE BEN JONSON."

The feature of the Phoenix Society's revival of Ben Jonson's robustious comedy of intrigue, "Volpone," was Mr. Ion Swinley's enjoyable acting as the smooth parasite who keeps three plots going at once. Vice fell and was vanquished at the end of a play which has been regarded as a masterpiece for three hundred years.

"A GIRLE WORTH GOLDE."

An Elizabethan melodrama which had not been staged in full for 278 years, "The Fair Maid of Perth ; or a Girle Worth Golde," was attractively revived at Hammersmith by the Phœnix Society. The majority of the scenes were played before black curtains, after Chows—a youth in doublet and hose—had announced, "The scene is laid in Plymouth," and so forth. Miss Violet Graham performed the title-part (curiously described by one of the Elizabethan characters as "some" tapstress !) most charmingly. A boy actor, Roger Livesey, was remarkably good as a precocious tavern lad.

"THE WITCH OF EDMONTON."

The weirdest of the weird sisters in "Macbeth" was no weirder than the Witch of Miss Sybil Thorndike in "The Witch of Edmonton," the Jacobean play by William Rowley, Thomas Dekker and John Ford, revived by the Phœnix Society.

She was a deformed old hag—hook-nosed, toothless, ghastly. Wisps of grey hair straggled over her shoulders. Bent nearly double, with one leg trailing after the other, she came on in a ragged brown cloak, leaning on a stave, and carrying a bundle of sticks. She croaked like a raven and hissed like a snake, and people "shunned and avoided her like a sickness."

The hag was a dupe of the Devil, represented no less strangely by Mr. Russell Thorndike in the guise of a dog and a lamb. This supernatural creature held converse with the mortals of the play, urging them to destruction. His gaunt features recalled Henry Irving's Mephistopheles. A clever device of make-up—the eyelids coated with red tinsel—produced an uncanny effect, theatrically Satanic.

A youth driven to murder and a woman to madness by the

witch's incantations were among the horrors of the play. Mr. Ion Swinley gave shuddering expression to the murderer's agony when he beheld the corpse of his victim in a black coffin. Miss Edith Evans also thrilled the audience with an extremely skilful portrayal of a raving madwoman.

It is a bad play constructionally—a thing of shreds and patches—but the dialogue of mixed prose and verse is graced by genuinely poetic passages.

Its revival was worth while for the sake of the admirable acting. Miss Thorndike's Witch and her brother's Devil were unforgettable creations, worthy in every way of those gifted players.

“VENICE PRESERV'D.”

A famous Restoration tragedy, dealing with plots, conspirators, and assassinations—Thomas Otway's “Venice Preserv'd; or A Plot Discover'd,” was excellently revived by the Phoenix Society.

The conspiracy aimed to destroy a Venetian Senate of the early seventeenth century. Discovery nipped it in the bud, and the conspirators were broken on the wheel. The heroine, Belvidera (a Siddons part), persuaded her husband, one of the plotters, to betray his confederates, in whose general ruin they became involved.

Otway's tragedy sounds bombastic to modern ears, but there is no denying the beauty and nobility of much of his verse. Its rolling periods were impressively spoken by Mr. Ion Swinley and Mr. Balliol Holloway as two of the conspirators. In the trying part of Belvidera, who goes madder than Ophelia, Miss Cathleen Nesbitt played with considerable emotional force.

* * * * *

O woman ! lovely woman ! Nature made thee
To temper man ; we had been brutes without you :
Angels are painted fair, to look like you :
There's in you all that we believe of Heaven,
Amazing brightness, purity, and truth,
Eternal joy, and everlasting love.

Those admirable lines were spoken by a character in “Venice Preserv'd.” Like many other passages in the play, they would have been worthy of William Shakespeare. The

tragedy has distinction, but it is hardly likely to continue to command the services of great actors and actresses, as it did for nearly two hundred years. Irving seriously thought of staging it at the old Lyceum. Wisely, he did no such thing.

BYRON'S "MANFRED."

When Lord Byron described his tragedy "Manfred" as "misbegotten" and "quite unsuitable for the stage" he reckoned, necessarily, without our twentieth-century Stage Society. That organisation, greatly daring, revived the work at Drury Lane Theatre with a measure of artistic success.

The tragedy of the nobleman Manfred, who sold himself to the Devil after committing unspeakable sin, is perhaps the gloomiest ever written. It is also one of the worst constructed, in the technical sense of the theatre, for no clue to its motive is provided until the concluding scene.

As Byron intended, it would indeed be intolerably dull on the stage but for Schumann's musical setting. The noble overture and the delicious preludes to each scene, added to a vivacious choral ballet of spirits—all rendered and contributed by the Beecham Opera Company and Symphony Orchestra—combined to give a stately impressiveness to the tragedy which would probably have surprised no one more than the poet himself.

Manfred, garbed like Hamlet, with a Byron collar, and even more introspective than the Dane, was finely portrayed by Mr. Courtenay Thorpe—a difficult character well performed.

BACK TO THE POWDER AND PATCHES.

What does the twentieth-century playgoer know of the nice conduct of a clouded cane or the elegant manipulation of a snuff-box?

Old English comedy, which was wont to set the benches in a roar, has been for more than a decade almost completely banished from the West End stage. The greatest comedy in the language, "The School for Scandal," which was never absent from the boards in the nineteenth century, is only seen occasionally nowadays. The rising generation of theatre-

goers has probably never heard of Mr. Puff, Sir Fretful Plagiary, Lord Ogleby, Mrs. Malaprop, Sir Novelty Fashion, Squire Sullen, Lord Foppington, Scrub, Boniface, Jerry Sneak, and a hundred other classic characters whose names were household words to our forefathers. Did the Teazles go out with the Farrens and the Scrubs with Lionel Brough?

Will it be believed that Oliver Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer ; or The Mistakes of a Night," one of the three finest comedies of the English stage, had not been performed in a West End theatre for thirteen years, prior to Mr. Fagan's 1921 revival ?

The comic diversions arising from Young Marlow's mistaking for an inn the country residence of his would-be benefactor, Mr. Hardcastle, have delighted several generations since its original production at Covent Garden in 1773. It is safe to say (present conditions notwithstanding) that generations to come will revel in the loutish buffooneries of the bucolic jackanapes Tony Lumpkin, who, with his quaint turn of humour, sets the rollicking imbroglio going. Kate Hardcastle, Old Hardcastle, Diggory, Tom Twist, Tom Tickle, Jack Slang, Mat Muggins—all the people of the play—are not for an age but for all time.

Since Elliston was Young Marlow and Bannister Tony Lumpkin and Old Farren Old Hardcastle, there have been hundreds of revivals of "She Stoops."

In living recollection the most important performances have been Sir Charles Wyndham's Young Marlow, acted with a Palais Royal rattle at the Criterion thirty-two years ago, Mr. Cyril Maude's perfect Old Hardcastle at the Haymarket shortly before his migration to the Playhouse, Mr. Robert Loraine's Young Marlow (also at the Haymarket), and the Kate Hardcastles of Miss Mary Moore and Miss Ethel Irving.

The Robert Loraine revival lives before me now. What a Young Marlow that was ! After the Haymarket *première* in 1909 I wrote of the future Cyrano : "He will be the Wyndham of his day"—and he is ! Nobody who saw him in "Arms and the Man" and "Man and Superman" would dispute his claim to the title.

Mr. Fagan, I hope, has no reason to regret his reversion to the powder-and-patches play. It may have been a far cry from the ultra-modernity of "Heartbreak House" to the Goldsmithian era of :—

The whitewash'd wall, the nicely sanded floor,
The varnish'd clock that click'd behind the door,
—but we took the journey gladly.

Mr. Fagan's revival at the Court Theatre did not, however, fully realise expectations. The grand style in Old English Comedy could not be caught in a few weeks' rehearsal by a company to a great extent unattuned to the spirit of the thing. Add to that drawback the allotment of two principal characters (Tony and Kate) to an actor much too old (Mr. Alfred Clark), and an actress much too young (Miss Ena Grossmith), and an uneven representation was inevitable. Still, it was better at that time to have a moderately good Goldsmith than no Goldsmith at all. Mr. Clark, despite his physical unfitness for a role of adolescence, made plenty of capital out of Tony's oafish humours. Mr. Miles Malleson's Diggory was clear-cut as a cameo, an exquisite bit of grotesquerie, and Mr. H. O. Nicholson and Miss Margaret Yarde were well in the period as Mr. and Mrs. Hardcastle. The revival, staged in four acts, commendably steered clear of farce, but one or two traditional gags were retained, such as Tony's "Climb up a tree, mother!"

FUTURISED OLD ENGLISH COMEDY !

A defunct play-producing society, of which Lord Howard de Walden was a trustee, made its bow at the Haymarket with a curious "modern" revival of Farquhar's early eighteenth-century comedy, "The Beaux' Stratagem." The work was ornately staged, and soundly acted by professional players, and it delighted a fashionable audience.

But why was the comedy modernised—almost, indeed, futurised? Its decorations were excessively "arty." Eccentric lines and curves made maze-like convolutions over walls and costumes. The dresses precisely matched the furniture in colouring, and a futuristic nudity was a mural oddity in a bedroom scene.

The total effect of these fantastic trappings was not unpleasing. They did credit in themselves to the originality of the designer, Lanne-Roche, and the producer, Mme. Donnet. Their applicability to "The Beaux' Stratagem," however, was far to seek. They militated against illusion by distracting attention from the action. They lessened the production's value as a picture of a period.

Altogether, they were so utterly out of keeping with the original scheme of the comedy that George Farquhar must have turned in his grave. The primary importance of these interesting revivals of old and rarely acted plays should consist in their faithful reproductions of the social airs and graces—or disgraces—of the periods which they represent. In that respect a useful purpose may be served by such revivals, for they are especially educational to actors, whose opportunities for instruction in stage classics were probably never fewer than at this moment.

The performance, happily, was another matter entirely. Rarely has a costume comedy been better cast. It was gay, spirited, accomplished. It had the eighteenth-century *flair*. The players wore their picturesque costumes as to the manner born. Their bearing and expression reflected inimitably the artificiality, foppishness, and affectation of a time when “pride was the delight of a woman and flattery her daily bread.” Histrionically, at any rate, the revival was worthy of the theatre, the Haymarket, in which the play was first performed more than two centuries ago.

“MARRIAGE À LA MODE.”

Modern bedroom farce is ecclesiastical by comparison with John Dryden’s naughty Restoration comedy, “*Marriage à la Mode*,” which the Phoenix Society revived at Hammersmith. If actresses ever blush beneath their make-up, one or two of them had occasion to do so in this production. The cavaliers and belles conducted their amours in language so outspoken that the play could not be presented except at one of these so-called “private” performances, which are attended by hundreds of women.

Dryden’s dialogue, however, is redeemed by its wit and poetry. The love-making imbroglio is so ingeniously worked out, with so much vivacity and humour, that the play could probably be bowdlerised effectively for the regular stage. The audience laughed long and heartily, especially at Miss Athene Seyler’s Melantha—the most perfect thing in feminine artificiality since Miss Ethel Irving’s Millamant.

GARRICK’S FAVOURITE PART.

There is no “naughtier” play in the English language than Sir John Vanbrugh’s seventeenth-century comedy,

“The Provok’d Wife,” which the Stage Society had the temerity to revive, after an interval of 123 years, at the King’s Hall.

The dialogue is so flagrantly indecent that even the Stage Society could not repeat the whole of it, despite the three-and-a-half hours’ traffic of the stage. This was regrettable, because the play of wit and fancy and the deft handling of a roguish marital imbroglio is the work of a master craftsman.

The splendid acting went far to make the experiment justifiable. This play contains a remarkable character, Sir John Brute, whose name does not belie him. It was Garrick’s favourite part.

Brute is a burly, beery roysterer, who provokes his wife into accepting the addresses of town gallants. A coward, too, as well as a drunkard and a bully, for when it comes to facing a lover’s steel, he welcomes discretion as the better part of valour. Mr. Hubert Carter gave a vigorous impersonation of the wretch. His drunken debauch was wonderful. Miss Ethel Irving’s vain and jealous Lady Fancyfull was a memorable study in feminine affectation, but the opportunities of the part are limited.

The dialogue of this comedy is so gross that it will probably never be licensed for public performance. Nevertheless, it is wise and witty as well as wicked—the work of genius lavished on depravity.

For that reason its revival was instructive. It was also valuable historically—as a picture of a licentious period. The brilliant acting, moreover, provided an additional justification. Besides, the author’s motives in writing the play cannot lightly be cast aside. He claimed to be fighting the battle of virtue by unmasking the immorality of his time. He even went so far as to declare, in print, that he was not really aware of the indecencies imputed to him, and that he could “very well fancy a virtuous woman laying his plays by the side of her Bible.”

Two little gems of wit glitter in the mire of “The Provok’d Wife’s” dialogue. Marriage is defined by the young gallant, Constant, as “the one inestimable lot in which heaven on earth is written.” This is capped by the assertion of the other gallant, Heartfree, that “to be capable of loving one, doubtless, is better than to possess a thousand.”

“LADY TEAZLE, BY ALL THAT’S WONDERFUL!”

The heroine of Sheridan’s “School for Scandal” as a stately grande dame! That was the amazing departure from tradition presented in a revival of the immortal comedy at the Court Theatre. The part had been deliberately miscast in defiance of the text. Charles Surface refers to Lady Teazle as “that pretty woman married to a man old enough to be her father.” Sir Peter Teazle says, “The difference in our ages makes it unlikely that she would have any affection for me—a foolish old bachelor who married a girl.” It would not do for the producer to plead that the first Lady Teazles, Mrs. Abington and Mrs. Jordan, were aged, respectively, forty and forty-seven when they played the part. Those volatile actresses probably “looked it” in spite of their years.

Apart from that grave error of judgment, which totally upset the balance of the production, the Court theatre revival was heartily enjoyed. The other principal characters were played by Mr. Arthur Whitby (a lovable Sir Peter). Mr. Herbert Waring (Joseph Surface), Mr. Leon Quartermaine (a bright, vivacious Charles), Mr. H. O. Nicholson (a first-rate Sir Oliver), and Mr. Moffatt Johnston (a capital Crabtree).

* * * * *

A performance of the screen scene from “The School” at a charity matinée (Princes, December 2, 1919) left the audience longing for more. How could it be otherwise with Mr. Dennis Eadie, Sir Gerald du Maurier, Mr. Arthur Wontner, and Miss Gladys Cooper playing respectively, for the first time, Sir Peter Teazle, Charles and Joseph Surface, and Lady Teazle?

Miss Cooper looked the ideal Lady Teazle. In spirit and demeanour she was equally satisfying. There is little doubt that Miss Cooper could play the full-length part successfully.

Mr. Eadie made a somewhat monotonous Sir Peter, and he hardly conveyed with sufficient unctuousness the old fellow’s anticipatory relish when he expected the fall of the screen to reveal a “little milliner.” Sir Gerald du Maurier’s Charles was deficient in raillery, but his reading of the episode of Lady Teazle’s discovery behind the screen contained a fresh and sincerely expressed note of sympathy for the disillusioned Sir Peter.

Mr. Wontner’s Joseph Surface forecast a notable representation of the role in a full-length revival. It was one of the

best things this accomplished actor has done. Joseph is on the stage during the whole of the screen scene, save for a few minutes, and there was opportunity, therefore, for the actor to illustrate numerous objects of a role which is replete with varied expression. Mr. Wontner did not fail in a single inflexion, and he was especially happy in the scene in which Joseph laughingly attempts to bluff Sir Peter into the belief that the lady behind the screen is only a little milliner.

WHEN THE CENSOR NODS.

“Has this fellow no feeling of his business?”

“HAMLET.”

CHAPTER III

WHEN THE CENSOR NODS

DISSATISFACTION with the office of Censor of Plays, under the control of the Lord Chamberlain,* is never-ending. Explosions of wrath against it have been periodic since Sir Robert Walpole, misled by a trick, contrived the Act of Parliament establishing a censorship of the Drama.

Walpole was tricked in the following manner:—The persons interested procured an underling to write a piece called “The Golden Rump,” a farrago of blasphemy and political abuse. This was submitted to a manager, Giffard, who—having previously been taught his part—took it to Sir Robert Walpole, Prime Minister. Walpole, shocked at this enormity, read its worst passages in the House of Commons, and an Act was immediately passed, with one dissentient vote, for submitting all dramatic pieces to the Lord Chamberlain’s inspection.

Now the Lord Chamberlain is primarily a Court official, technically interested in Drawing-rooms. It is doubtful whether any holder of the office has ever been actively responsible for the censoring of plays. That duty devolves on a subordinate official of his department, the King’s Reader of Plays, who is assisted by a staff of advisers. If this body refuses to license a play there is no appeal, because the licenser, a Court official, is not responsible to Parliament—truly a ridiculous anomaly.

The advisability or inadvisability of abolishing the censorship of plays depends on a definitive answer to this question: Is it or is it not in the interests of public morality that plays should be licensed?

Advocates of abolition—who include many eminent dramatists—argue that public opinion is all the safeguard that is necessary. Others suggest that the Public Prosecutor could

* The Lord Chamberlain’s title may have been changed to that of State Chamberlain when this book appears.

deal with the producers of prurient plays, just as he deals with the publishers of prurient books.

In any case, the present system is so full of annoyances that a reconstruction of the Lord Chamberlain's office appears to be called for. Away with figureheads and sinecures! This is A.D. 1922, and Walpole is as dead as Queen Anne.

MORALITY IN STAGE COSTUME.

Newspaper critics, literary and dramatic, have a responsibility to the public in criticising books and plays. It is incumbent upon them to pillory and expose publications and productions which they believe are a danger to society. The craft of dramatic criticism bears a particular responsibility in that respect.

For that reason a matter of vital public importance emerged from a controversy between Mr. C. B. Cochran and the writer of these pages on the subject of alleged improper dresses in "As You Were," a Cochran revue at the London Pavilion.

I attacked those dresses. So did nearly all my critical colleagues on the London daily Press. There were eight morning newspapers in London, and five of them denounced the costumes as objectionable. The majority of the evening papers followed suit. Altogether, out of fourteen daily and evening papers, nine were severely condemnatory. The remaining critics, if they did not publicly object to the dresses, accorded them no praise.

It has often been said that when the critics do agree, their unanimity is wonderful. On this occasion it would have been more wonderful if they had disagreed. How could they have had two opinions about costumes which made a laughing-stock and a derision of womanhood?

The scene was supposed to be a satire on the Court of the Hunzollern. "The ladies of the Court," said one disgusted critic, "are alike afflicted with pronounced *embonpoint*." This may have been meant as a satire on German grossness and the stupidities of fashion, but the giggles of the audience proved that quite a different interpretation could be put, and was, on this unsightly and indelicate joke.

"Where's the Censor?" the critic of the *Daily Express* exclaimed. The *Times* asked that the scene should be removed. So did the *Westminster Gazette*. The *Daily Telegraph* declared it to be "a breach of taste for which it

would have been hard to find any extenuation." Other critics were even more emphatic in their disapproval.

Mr. Cochran bowed to the storm. He removed the more objectionable dresses. Not all, however, for Mlle. Alice Delysia continued to wear a costume which the *Daily Express* described as "daring," and of which the *Morning Post* remarked, "Seldom can an actress have worn so negligible a dress." Mlle. Delysia also continued to wear what Mr. Cochran styled "a delightful mediæval costume with protruding stomach."

The manager's defence was that the dresses were historically correct. So, for that matter, was Eve's costume in the Garden of Eden, but even Mr. Cochran would hardly venture to "present" Mlle. Alice Delysia in that attire before a modern audience.

Other matters mentioned by Mr. Cochran in his bout with the critics—such as their attitude to his previous productions and his own qualifications as a costume expert—were beside the issue. The main point was: Were these costumes indecorous? The critics said they were. Mr. Cochran said they were not. Had Mr. Cochran any supporters? If so, why were they silent?

HOW MR. COCHRAN PULLED OUR LEG.

Mr. Cochran must have been pulling our leg when he announced that "Afgar" at the London Pavilion would be "as innocent and pretty as 'Peg o' my Heart.'" If, on the other hand, he meant that assertion to be taken seriously, the author of "Peg," Mr. Hartley Manners, should have sued Mr. Cochran for defamation of character!

Innocent, indeed! That is exactly what "Afgar" was not. Pretty? H'm—yes! . . . With a leer beneath its prettiness. Gorgeous, sensual, risky, would be more appropriate terms to apply to "Afgar."

Could any sane person anticipate an atmosphere of innocence in a play produced by Mr. Cochran at the London Pavilion about a Moorish harem, in an atmosphere of passion and cushions, with a half-naked dancer performing an Eastern wriggle before Mlle. Alice Delysia in the role of a potentate's favourite wife?

Let us examine Mr. Cochran's notion of innocence as exemplified in "Afgar."

The lord Afgar was an oleaginous Moorish potentate with a harem of thirty wives. The wives went on strike, demanding "double pay for overtime in the harem." The favourite wife (Mlle. Delysia) had an affair with a Spanish lover to whom she made passionate love. "Take me in your arms," she implored him. "Let loose the bursting dam. I want the rough stuff."

When the lover proved cold, she exclaimed, "The bursting dam is no damned good." The lord Afgar, in his turn, appeared to realise his position. "I don't seem to get on with the ladies as I used to," he wailed. "I've gone off my stroke lately. They don't seem to fall to me as they used to do."

Another fair striker of the harem protested: "I care not what kind of a husband I get so long as I get one in his entirety." In that respect the favourite wife was afflicted with qualms. "Am I not a complete collection? Is there anything missing?" she asked. "I don't know," the lord Afgar replied, "I haven't been through an inventory lately."

Yet another illustration of "Afgar's" "innocence" was the potentate's remark: "It's a wise child that knows its own father, but it's a wiser husband that knows his own wife. Is it not written that a wife at home knitting a woollen jumper is better than two in Brighton wearing *crêpe de Chine*?"

Pages could be filled with similar specimens of dialogue which Mr. Cochran regarded as comparable with the language of "Peg o' My Heart."

* * * * *

An editorial article on stage control in the *Stage* newspaper contained the following passage:—

"But it may be questioned whether the Lord Chamberlain, as licenser of plays, does anything to raise the tone of the dramatic stage. He passes a good deal that under a permissive censorship would be produced at its own risk. His licence is a certificate of good character; and as his standard has become lax this certificate is sought and obtained for pieces that would not so often see the light if his department did not obligingly shoulder the responsibility that would otherwise fall upon the producing management."

That passage contains an absolute endorsement of everything I said in my repeated attacks on the Lord Chamberlain's control. If, as the *Stage* declares, that authority's standard

has become lax what earthly value is his licence as "a certificate of good character"?

The principles actuating the stage censorship during the war were worse than lax. They were rotten. If a dramatic critic could not express opinions on subjects affecting the very existence of the theatre as an institution, of what practical use is the profession of dramatic criticism?

What was my actual motive in attacking "As You Were" and "Afgar"? The motive was a life-long love of the theatre. I was jealous of the fair fame of the theatre, and I defended it as a man would defend his loved one's honour.

I would have attacked "As You Were" and "Afgar" if they had been produced by an intimate friend. There are times when even friendship must go to the wall—when, for example, it imperils and asperses honour.

The honour of the theatre and of the dramatic profession is worth defending. It is a force in the life-blood of the community. If the stage be rotten, the community may be rotten, too. The influence exercised by the stage on the public weal is as great as that of almost any other national institution, such as Parliament, the pulpit, or the Press.

Mr. C. B. Cochran fell into the intrinsic error of regarding the whole miserable business as a joke. Humour is a power in the world, but sincerity is a mightier Nasmyth.

"Life is real, life is earnest!" Humour loses its savour when it becomes perverted. Similarly, the stage will lose its savour if it is allowed to pander to the purposes of perversion. We who love the theatre will not let that happen.

* * * * *

The "Afgar" controversy was summed up editorially by the *Daily Express* in the following leading articles:—

I.

Mr. Charles B. Cochran produced "Afgar," and the dramatic critic of the *Daily Express* has expressed his opinion of it. We are entitled to hope that this opinion will be shared by sane playgoers. Unluckily, however, we have all to reckon with the less sane, with the meretricious, with those whose predilections debase good taste. Mr. Cochran has, of course, to reckon with them, and that, we suppose, gives him the reason and excuse for a production of glorious colour and beauty deformed and distorted by a gross sensuality. If Mr.

Cochran were not a great artist "Afgar" would lack its pictorial enchantment. If he were less sensibly the keen business man, the sensual trimmings would have been deleted. We must believe that Mr. Cochran, in a quiet moment in the wings, will agree that the colours were as lovely as the libretto and dialogue were unlovely. But so long as men like Mr. Cochran, who have a soul to feel art, and an intelligence to understand it, pander to the baser taste, we lose what the soul and intelligence might coin for us. Public taste, like all else, is now in the melting pot.

II.

The Lord Chamberlain has intervened, and the costume of a principal dancer in "Afgar," at the Pavilion Theatre, has been "modified" at his request. What we should like to know is why the Lord Chamberlain waited all this time. To him are now confided the duties of a censorship of stage plays. Why does he expose his office to ridicule and the public to indecency masquerading as artistic æstheticism? If this lady's dress is inadequate to-day, it was inadequate when the play was first produced. If it is now necessary to have it "modified," what excuse is there for leaving it intact for all these weeks? Here we have a theatrical entertainment of a debased type, the dialogue depending for wit on very obvious double meanings, the dressing shameless and magnificent, the whole production distorted by a suggestive indelicacy, and the protection of the public taste is left to the dramatic critic of the *Daily Express*. He gives an honest verdict and makes an emphatic protest on behalf of the decencies and of public taste. He is assailed as a "prude" and held up to ridicule. Eventually that tardy champion, the Lord Chamberlain, partly intervenes. Such a state of things is unfair to the players, who can only protest against dialogue which they may despise at the expense of their vital interests. It is unfair to the critic, who finds no support when the discharge of a clear duty would render unnecessary his protest. It is unfair to the public, who, despite the existence of the Lord Chamberlain's office, find themselves their own censors. As for Mr. Cochran, the producer, if he really deems it well to exert his great and genuinely artistic talents to extort unwholesome leers and a mirthless curiosity, it is obvious that he must be left to discover for himself the extent of his error.

"NO GENTLEMAN'S JOB."

A chemise was the cause of all the bother in an impudent bedroom play, "Up in Mabel's Room," which was deservedly booed by a portion of the audience at its Playhouse first night.

The Censor, it was said, would not allow the word chemise to be spoken. The article was therefore called an under-vest : also "that thing," "that you-know-what," "that little bit of evidence," "that little fluffy pink thing," "Mabel's understanding," and "Mabel's whereabouts."

Anything, in fact, but a chemise. Yet a chemise it certainly was. Women in the audience identified it as such, as well as two other "you-know-whats" which were unceasingly bandied about the stage.

"It was no gentleman's job," as one of the characters most truly remarked, to secure Mabel's "whereabout" for her former flame, Garry Ainsworth (Sir Charles Hawtrey), who had given it to her, with his monogram attached, before his marriage to a girl who did not happen to be Mabel. Naturally, Garry hated to think that his bride should hear of his indiscretion ; "the record," as Mabel remarked "of the only naughty thought Garry ever had."

So Garry ardently desired the recovery of the fluffy pink thing. He implored Mabel to return it, but she refused. Her reasons were a little obscure. The principal one, perhaps, was that if she had done so there would have been no play. She thought, too, that Garry's wife was "a narrow-minded, self-sufficient little prig," who deserved to be punished.

Anyway, she led Garry and his man-servant a pretty dance before he obtained the "understanding" by the simple expedient of walking into her bathroom (an incident enacted on the stage !) while she was having her bath and taking it from the hook where she had hung it.

The chase for the chemise took place in the Long Island residence of Mabel's fiancé. It necessitated Sir Charles Hawtrey's presence in Mabel's bedroom, hiding under her bed in his shirt sleeves. The comedian was constantly issuing from his retreat and as frequently diving back when threatened by discovery, and it is only fair to say that his antics created laughter.

Necessarily, no doubt, Mabel wore pyjamas. She disrobed as far as the "whereabout" while Garry was under the bed. Then she retired to her dressing-room and reappeared in the pyjamas, which were particularly "fetching" ones, deeply trimmed with lace. Another young woman who had occasion to enter the bedroom wore a suit of black pyjamas underneath her negligee.

At the end of the bedroom scene the chemise-hunter was discovered by Mabel's fiancé side by side with her on the bed.

That is an unvarnished description of the play. The story is told unreservedly in order that the public may draw its own conclusions. If the piece had genuine wit or humour, something (not much) could be said in its favour.

The actresses who appeared in "Up in Mabel's Room" were Miss Marie Hemingway, Miss Beatrice Lillie, Miss Isobel Elsom, Miss Doris Kendal, and Miss Daisy Elliston. The actors, besides Sir Charles Hawtrey, were Mr. Oswald Marshall, Mr. Fred Knight, Mr. Stanley Brett, and Mr. J. R. Tozer.

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One of the most significant events of the 1920-21 season was the early withdrawal of "Up in Mabel's Room." Its "run" only lasted little more than a month. Almost any play with Sir Charles Hawtrey in it is, as a rule, good for at least three months on the strength of that great comedian's reputation alone.

The public, therefore, signalled its disapproval of this class of play by refusing to patronise "Up in Mabel's Room."

One good thing may have resulted from its production. Sir Charles' constant crawling under Mabel's bed may have improved his physical health, which had not been very good. In that case, even "Up in Mabel's Room" was almost entitled to absolution.

STAGE BILLINGSGATE.

The word "bloody" has been giving the stage censor a lot of trouble lately. Does he or does he not know his own mind in regard to its employment on the stage?

He vetoed it altogether in "In the Zone" at the Everyman Theatre. The expression "bleedin'" had to be substituted.

On the other hand, he winked at it in Shaw's "Pygmalion." He blue-pencilled it in "The Right to Strike," but afterwards

recanted and allowed the horrid word (" You bloody murderer ! ") to be spoken. How is that for inconsistency ?

Again, if " bloody " may not be permitted in a play, should it be allowed in a managerial speech before the play, as illustrated at the Everyman ? Where are we ?

" Bloody " was also spoken in Lord Dunsany's " If " at the Ambassadors. The scene was a railway station platform.

" How goes it, Bill ? " said one porter to another.

Bill's answer was laconic, but comprehensive.

" Bloody ! " he replied.

In other words, " Fed up ! "

The delicate ears of Everyman Theatre patrons were assailed by worse language than that.

A Cockney character in " In the Zone," nicknamed Cocky, never opened his mouth without giving vent to an expletive.

" You go to hell ! " was one of his expressions. In the American version of the play that particular adjuration, disallowed by our Censor, took the form of " May God blast you ! "

Cocky also exclaimed " For Christ's sake ! " The Censor had not cut that line, which, to my thinking, sounded infinitely more blasphemous than " Bloody. "

It is extraordinary what the Censor will pass for the stage and what he won't.

For example, there is the familiar East End expression, " Gorblimey ! " Translated, I believe that means, " God blind me ! " a truly awful imprecation. Yet " Gorblimey " occurred over and over again in the dialogue of the Cockney musical play, " Cherry," at the Apollo Theatre. " Go to hell ! " may apparently be spoken with impunity on any stage. Last season I heard it in many plays—in " French Leave," " Brown Sugar," " The ' Ruined ' Lady," and " His Lady Friends."

In " Brown Sugar " it was put in the mouth of that charming flapper-actress, Edna Best, from whose pretty lips it sounded doubly " shocking. "

The effect was somewhat similar in " The ' Ruined ' Lady." It occurred in a scene of recrimination between two girls. One of them, a flapper, closed the discussion by exclaiming, " Oh, you go to hell ! "

" Hell ! " and " Damn ! " are almost commonplace forms of vituperation on the modern stage.

"What the hell do you think you're playing at?" somebody said in "French Leave."

"What the hell do you know about women, anyway?" Mr. James Carew asked Sir Charles Hawtrey in "His Lady Friends."

"What did she say when she recovered consciousness?" a character asked in "At the Villa Rose." The reply was, "She said, 'Oh, hell! I'm going to be sick!'" (Loud laughter.)

I doubt whether the stage has ever been accorded greater licence in the matter of blasphemous language than at the present time. Its comparative freedom from official interference seems to date from the first night of "Pygmalion." Prior to that event, no such passage of dialogue had been heard in the modern theatre as the one in which Eliza Doolittle informed Freddy that she wouldn't walk across the park with him—"not bloody likely!"

So Bernard Shaw has something to answer for. He started it.

HERE AND THERE IN STAGELAND

“Where their true intent is all for your delight.”

CHAPTER IV

HERE AND THERE IN STAGELAND

WHY "GREEN" ROOM?

THERE are very few green rooms nowadays, so "Green Room Gossip" is largely a figurative title. The derivation of the name itself is obscure. One authority attributes it to the custom in Elizabethan times of strewing the floor of the retiring room in the theatres with green rushes. Another suggests that it is a probable corruption of "agreeing" or "greeing" room, where the players first conned and copied their parts from the author's M.S.

The green rooms of Covent Garden and Drury Lane were the rendezvous of wits and beaux in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. No visitor was allowed to enter who was not in full evening dress. Even the actors were excluded if in boots, unless they were attired in stage habiliments. The Haymarket had a famous green room, one of the rules of which exacted a fine of a bottle of whisky from any one who caused a stage wait. Ellen Terry tells us that the old Lyceum's green room, "With its four stately pillars, its glass, its walls lined with pictures, old playbills, and good prints, was quite a history of the theatre."

The passing of the green room reminds me of another effete institution of the English theatre—the omnibus box. This was a large box on each side of the stage, below its level. Omnibus box seats were rented at the opera by members of the nobility, who hobnobbed with the stars and ballet dancers behind the scenes. Other omnibus box seats were occupied by recognised connoisseurs of dramatic art.

THE GREEN BAIZE CURTAIN.

There is another almost effete institution of the English theatre besides the green room and the omnibus box. This is the green baize curtain, now only encountered occasionally

in provincial playhouses. Its atmosphere of mystery was admirably suited to serious plays and tragedies. The newer theatres, largely devoted to lighter forms of drama, found the decorative act-drop more attractive. There is probably no curtain in London more appropriate to the house than the Haymarket's. Its central feature is the ballroom scene in "The School for Scandal," taken from the Bancrofts' revival some forty years ago. Another famous curtain, Henry Irving's at the old Lyceum, was transferred to the King's Theatre, Hammersmith.

In connection with the above, I rang up the proprietor of the King's, Mr. J. B. Mulholland. "Yes," he said, "I am still using it. I have had the curtain about fourteen years, and I got it for an old song. Telbin was the painter. His work is in good condition, but a well-known artist has touched it up. Some time ago I took Miss Ellen Terry to the front of the house, had the theatre lighted up, and asked her if she could see anything she remembered. Miss Terry was silent. She sat for several minutes without a word. Then the tears welled into her eyes and rolled down her cheeks. Miss Terry remembered all right!"

THESPIS, M.P.

"The popular member for the Maidenlane Division, Miss Lena Ashwell, was the first to catch the Speaker's eye."

Why not? . . . But when?

The main body of the theatrical profession is without direct representation in Parliament. How is it that the Actors' Association, in its newly-found trade union zeal, has not produced a candidate? Its choice, if one should ever be made, ought to be an actor. No doubt it would be difficult for a working actor to sit in the House of Commons—but there are others. Sir Squire Bancroft would be physically unequal to the strain, but what about Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, whose Shakespearean recitals are so delightful?

The theatre, however, has always been a laggard in politics. Whenever dramatists or actors dabble in political matters they invariably come to grief. True, that may be for the best in an artistic sense, for the average playgoer dislikes politics in the theatre.

The nearest approach to a successful play of political interest that we have had for some time was Arnold Bennett's

“The Title,” and that was largely a non-partisan affair. I doubt whether a single play has ever been produced which reflects with any degree of faithfulness the real atmosphere of English political life either in or out of Parliament. In “The Grain of Mustard Seed,” a more recent example, verisimilitude was sacrificed to wit.

Mr. Jones’ “The Bauble Shop,” with its Leader of the House flirting in a toy shop, was merely romantic. So was Mr. Parker’s “Disraeli.”

Pinero’s “The Cabinet Minister” and “The Times”—the latter with Edward Terry as an M.P.—were farcical. Tom Robertson’s “M.P.” and J. H. McCarthy’s “The Candidate” possessed no claims to exactitude. Mr. Bernard Shaw’s semi-political play-writing is—well, Shavian! Another political play, “Worldham, M.P.,” which Lewis Waller produced at the defunct Imperial, made no impression, although the author was supposed to be a member of the House of Commons.

Indirectly, the theatre has often been represented at Westminster by members addicted to playwriting, sometimes professionally. Richard Brinsley Sheridan had produced “The School for Scandal” at Drury Lane three years before he became member for Stafford in 1780. Cobden, Chamberlain and Labouchere were amateur dramatists, and in later years there have been many playwright M.P.’s, including Mr. A. E. W. Mason, Mr. Fred Horner, Sir Gilbert Parker, Mr. Claude Lowther, and Mr. Justin Huntly McCarthy, while Mr. Bottomley, it is said, has a leaning in that direction.

All this, however, counts for little beside the point at issue, which is that the theatre should have its own member of Parliament, preferably an actor.

HOW TO WRITE A PLAY.

“Plays come in shoals, in hurricanes, in whirlwinds,” says Miss Agnes Platt. “I myself have read over a thousand a year.” Miss Platt is a professional play-reader and “play doctor” (as she styles herself). Her clients number scores of the best-known managers and dramatists. She was cradled in the theatrical profession. Her advice on how to write and how not to write a play is at your service in her new book, “Hints on Playwriting” (Stanley Paul, 3s. 6d. net).

I have read and enjoyed every word of the book. It is clever, bright, practical, and sympathetically written. It tells the beginner exactly what errors to avoid in preparing manuscript for the typist; how to build up a scenario, to select and differentiate the characters, to make entrances and exits plausible, to plan and create situations, "curtains," and atmosphere, to guard against unnecessary expense in casting parts, and how to dispose of the play, with hints on terms and agreements. It defines a multitude of stage terms, such as "scenario," "bite your cues," "heavy lead," "front cloth," "back cloth," "the blind," "props," "to cover," "to fluff," and "to get over."

If a manager sees a soliloquy on the first page of a play, says Miss Platt, he will say, "Inexperienced; he has never had anything on." Similar deductions are made from the look of the manuscript, the binding, and type. The wording of stage directions betrays the amateur. The magic symbols, R.C.L., Up, Down, P., O.P., and so forth are frequently misapplied. The worst fault a play can have, lack of action, must be guarded against. Three lines of typewritten script are a sufficient length for any but a most important speech on the stage.

Useful "pointers" are given on every page. For example:—

"An exit line should be so written that it can be spoken at the door so as to avoid the necessity of the actor crossing the stage in silence to go out.

"Interviews of a secret character should not take place in halls and galleries, where all that is said will be at the mercy of any one passing.

"A play that will give no opportunity at all for pretty frocks will have a hard fight for public favour.

"Keep your expenses down by keeping your cast down."

When Flaubert was training de Maupassant to write he set him a theme each day. The next day de Maupassant would bring him his written version of the theme. Flaubert would read it through and say, "Very good; now go back and cut out every unnecessary word."

I have said that Miss Platt's work is sympathetically written. She repeatedly insists that plays must be human and charming. "The whole art of stage writing, as of stage acting, is contained in Shakespeare's phrase, 'The touch of

Nature.' " "Can you tell us in one word," she was asked, "the essential quality of a play?" "I replied, 'Yes, I can—Lovableness.' " That is just the special quality of this engaging little book. I love its concluding paragraph:—

"It is an odd world, this stage world of ours; a fascinating, twopenny-halfpenny world; so like this book of mine, half rhetoric, half slang; but at the back of it all, unspoken, taken for granted, there is a simple code of honour—'The public first, and self—nowhere.' "

IRVING THE YOUNGER.

The loss suffered by the English stage by the premature death of Mr. H. B. Irving may be irreparable in our time. He missed greatness by a hair's breadth. He might have achieved it completely—if he had been spared—within the next decade. He would then have been at the height of his powers for such a part as Hamlet. And what a Richard the Third he would have made!

Thoughts engendered by these possibilities are poignant with regret.

Irving the Younger's playing of Irving the Elder's roles was not a great deal less distinguished than his father's. If, however, he had acted them even better they would still have been of inferior value, for at the best they were imitations as opposed to creations—and a mimic cannot be classed in the same category as an originator. Where H. B. Irving proved himself to be a well-nigh incomparable artist—perhaps the one actor of recent years with a spark of true genius—was in work performed off his own bat, such as his Admirable Crichton, Letchmere in "Letty" and Mr. Hyde.

Our captains of the Drama are departing, and where are their successors: Within the last few years we have lost, in quick succession. Waller, Willard, Tree, Alexander, Wyndham, Hare, and H. B. Irving. As Henley sang:—

Where are the passions they essayed,
And where the tears they made to flow?
Where the wild humours they portrayed
For laughing worlds to see and know?
* * * * *

Into the night go one and all.

October, 1919.

The "star's" room at the Savoy Theatre is exactly as the late Mr. H. B. Irving left it. Its occupant, Mr. Godfrey Tearle, has not displaced a single article. The housekeeper sighs as she unlocks the door, and there are "tears in her voice" as she describes the various souvenirs—for the room is an Irving picture gallery.

"H. B.'s" own portrait does not appear in character—nor is there anything personally relating to his stage career.

There are many photographs of Mrs. H. B. Irving (Miss Dorothea Baird) and of their two children—Captain Laurence Irving (in an aeroplane) and Elizabeth Irving as a little girl, with her arms entwined around her father's neck. These pictures are mostly about the dressing-table, where they would catch the actor's eye at every turn of the head.

Near the dressing-table is a remarkable Irving souvenir—the stamped legal document, with Queen Victoria's signature, which authorised "H. B.'s" father to change his name from John Henry Brodribb to Henry Irving.

There are autographed photographs of Princess Beatrice, M. Safonoff ("an unforgettable remembrance of our first meeting"), and of Sarah Bernhardt; a series of fifteen portrait studies of Henry Irving as a young man; a beautiful portrait of Henry Irving after his knighthood; and several old and faded photographs of Irving the Elder in play groups of the 'seventies. One of these play groups was presented to Henry Irving "from Dan Leno, with the best wishes one person can wish another." The only playbill in the collection is an original one of Irving's first Lyceum performances in "The Bells" and in the same evening as Alfred Jingle in "Pickwick."

THE HOUSE OF IRVING.

Irving is the greatest name associated with the modern British drama. Why not, therefore, an Irving theatre in the West End of London?

The late H. B. Irving stated a few years before his death that he intended to build his own theatre and to give it the family name, but the project fell through. The wish was there, however, and it should be respected.

One of the new theatres which are being planned for London should be called the Irving. Its rooms and vestibules should be adorned with mementoes of the Irvings—Henry, "H. B.,"

and Laurence as well as of their illustrious contemporary, Ellen Terry.

It would not be the first of the name in this country. I was present many years ago at a luncheon to Henry Irving at Seacombe, on the Mersey, when a local theatre named after the actor was opened. Its appellation was changed in later years ; but the name will long survive that particular theatre !

Another commendable proposal is that a memorial tablet to H. B. and Laurence Irving should be affixed to the statue to their father in Charing Cross-road.

That statue is a fine portrait facially, but the figure as a whole does not represent the Irving of the theatre.

It portrays the actor in the unfamiliar robes of a doctor of literature—a complimentary degree conferred by a university. Every time I see the statue I feel that a mistake was made.

THE BOOING OF SLAPSTICK.

Horseplay humour with a seasoning of vulgarity is called, in theatrical parlance, *slapstick*. The prime purveyors of *slapstick* are red-nosed comedians, baggy-trousered clowns, face-slapping knockabouts with exaggerated feet, and tumblers who “boot” each other’s posteriors. *Slapstick* may be vocal as well as physical. A “comic” who nearly bawls the roof off a music-hall is a raucous exponent of *slapstick*. Stage or circus clowning of the old-fashioned sort, from Grimaldi even unto *Grock*, is all *slapstick* more or less—in *Grock*’s case less than more—for *Grock* is *Grock*, and a genius at the game.

When the pit and gallery at the London Pavilion hissed and booed the Brothers Fratellini, circus clowns, they tolled the knell of *slapstick* on the West End stage.

Alas, poor *Yorick* ! His is a dying avocation. “*Joey*” is only tolerated in the Christmas pantomime for old times’ sake. His application of the red-hot poker to the tender portion of the policeman’s anatomy has long ceased to amuse. Even the children remain impassive when the gentleman in bismuth and vermillion licks a property flicth of bacon to test its flavour. “*Joey*” and his tribe have been deposed for all time by *Pierrot*—the child of Jean Gaspard Deburau—who flourishes on his wit, not on the colour of his proboscis or the size of his feet.

The Fratellinis confidently expected a West End audience

to laugh at a revolving wig and a head which burst into flames extinguished by a hose-pipe. That would have been well enough for Hengler's Cirque in the 'eighties, or the Hippodrome in its arena period. It is still acceptable, no doubt, at the Cirque Medrano, Paris. Here, at this time of day, it is looked upon as slapstick ; and the only kind of slapstick suited to sophisticated West End theatregoers is Bernard Shaw's. Bernard Shaw standing on his head in "Heartbreak House" was intellectual slapstick.

*DECLINE OF DICKENS DRAMA.**

Charles Dickens' name has been absent from West-End playbills for so many years that Bransby Williams's impersonations of some of his most famous characters at the Colisseum came almost as a novelty. Mr. Williams's vivid impressions of Fagin, Micawber, Sikes, Heep, Peggotty, and others whose names are household words, are, to my mind, as artistic as anything ever presented on the music-hall stage. They probably serve a useful purpose in prompting thousands of young people to discover for themselves the delights of immortal novels which they only know by hearsay.

Nevertheless it is a fact that the theatre which Dickens loved so well has ceased to exploit his stories. Players, managers and dramatists seem to have made up their minds that Dickens drama is defunct. Almost the only Dickens character familiar to the playgoing public to-day is Sidney Carton, as performed by Martin Harvey in his version of the "Tale of Two Cities," entitled "The Only Way."

This astonishing theatrical decline of Dickens would have seemed unthinkable a quarter of a century ago. In those days, Toole was enchanting audiences with his Artful Dodger and Caleb Plummer, and Dickensians were chuckling over the recollection of Edward Terry's Dodger. They were able to recall the incomparable Jingle of Henry Irving at the Lyceum. Some of them remembered the Keeleys in "The Cricket on the Hearth," the Bumble of Lal Brough, the Oliver Twist of Henrietta Hodson. Everybody who had ever entered a theatre seemed to have witnessed the version of "Bleak House," with Jennie Lee as Jo.

Such was the vogue of Dickens Drama even in the late nineteenth century that dramatisations of the more famous

* Reprinted from "The Democrat."

novels were numbered by the hundred. My friend, Chance Newton, a veteran professional playgoer, says that in one week, in the days of his youth, fifteen adaptations of "The Cricket on the Hearth" were being performed in London. "Oliver Twist" was almost equally ubiquitous, and it is a little-known fact that in one of these versions, at the Queen's in Long Acre, Henry Irving played Bill Sikes.

The influence of Dickens on the stage was so pronouncedly beneficial in his lifetime that this modern neglect of his works almost savours of ingratitude. Nearly every elderly playgoer is a Dickensian, and it hurts him to reflect that there is no place in the contemporary theatre for the multitudinous creations of the master's brain.

And Dickens himself—what would his feelings be if he were alive to-day? They may be surmised, perhaps, from the following passage in his speech at the first anniversary festival of the General Theatrical Fund Association. "I tried to recollect in coming here," he said, "whether I have ever been in any theatre in my life from which I had not brought away some pleasant association, however poor the theatre, and I protest, out of my varied experience, I could not remember one from which I had not brought some favourable impressions."

HIGH DRAMA DOWN AN ALLEY.

Strange as it may seem, the outstanding theatrical event in London of the twentieth century (to date) was not the five years' run of "Chu Chin Chow." Much more remarkable is the vogue of the little Lyric Theatre at Hammersmith, where the "Abraham Lincolns" and "Beggar's Operas" come from.

Like the old Prince of Wales' in the Tottenham Court-road, which the Bancrofts made world-famous as the home of Robertson comedy, the Hammersmith Lyric was almost a "dusthole" when Mr. Arnold Bennett and Mr. Nigel Playfair acquired it in the winter of 1918.

For nearly thirty years it had subsisted largely on touring melodramas of the type of "The Girl who Took the Wrong Turning." The vast majority of West-End playgoers had not even heard of the house. Ninety-nine theatrical managers out of a hundred would have laughed at the idea

of converting the Hammersmith "Dusthole" into a play-house capable of attracting the literati.

Everything was against that hare-brained notion. The place is not only "off the map" of London stageland. Even in Hammersmith Broadway, a stone's-throw from the theatre, you may be puzzled to locate it. The entrance is down an alley off a side street blocked with coster's barrows. The limousines which have negotiated that alley-way in their thousands since 1918 have had to back out for lack of wheel room.

The one manager in a hundred who "glimpsed" those motor-cars in darkest Hammersmith was Mr. Nigel Playfair. He found the theatre boarded up, and in a state of comparative decay. There was talk of turning it into a cinema. He obtained it—as compared with the fantastic theatre rentals which generally prevailed—for less than the proverbial old song.

"I liked the look of the theatre," Mr. Playfair told me. "Its decorations were florid, but we are gradually toning them down. The acoustics are good, the auditorium is commodious (it seats 750 people), and the lines of sight are perfect from every part of the house. Once you know the place, its accessibility from every part of London is splendid. I was convinced that the theatre only needed the right kind of play to be a success."

Mr. Playfair and the chairman of his board of directors, Mr. Arnold Bennett, were the right kind of men to find that right kind of play. Mr. Bennett's knowledge of the theatre is well known. Mr. Playfair is an old Harrovian and Oxonian who started with the O.U.D.S.

A man of Mr. Playfair's attainments, steeped as he is in the lore of the theatre, would naturally be attracted by the work of that model organisation, the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. He brought "Abraham Lincoln" to Hammersmith. Monarchs and princes, archbishops and statesmen, were lured to the quondam "Dusthole." The author of the play, Mr. John Drinkwater, became the most widely discussed dramatist of the day.

In its first two years the Hammersmith Lyric has furnished such admirable fare, in addition to "Abraham Lincoln," as A. A. Milne's "Make-Believe," Stanley Houghton's "The Younger Generation," St. John Ervine's "John Ferguson,"

Shakespeare's "As You Like It," and Gay's "Beggar's Opera," which, at the time of writing, bids fair to rival the run of "Chu Chin Chow."

Such is the story, writ large in stage history, of how the little theatre at Hammersmith Took the Right Turning.

WELL DONE, D'OYLY CARTE!

Gilbert and Sullivan Opera is essentially an English institution, of which Englishmen are rightly proud. The immortal works revived at the Princes Theatre have set a standard in the art of light opera unapproached in any other country. They are an abiding example to practitioners of the form, not only on account of their technical completeness, but because of their purity of tone and intention.

Imagine the loss that would have been inflicted on the world at large if these beautiful works had been permitted to fall into decay as a result of managerial neglect or lack of confidence? Such might well have been the case, for even the Gilbert and Sullivan vogue had its crises, notably when the partnership was temporarily dissolved after "The Gondoliers," and again when the Savoy company was broken up in 1903 as a direct consequence of the diversion of public taste from comic opera to musical comedy.

Fortunately for this precious heritage of song and laughter, the duty of keeping alight the flame of Gilbert and Sullivan's genius devolved on Mr. Rupert D'Oyly Carte, a man hereditarily disposed to the task. It is primarily due to Mr. Rupert D'Oyly Carte that the Gilbert and Sullivan operas are more popular to-day, and probably more lucrative, than at any other period in their history.

The name of D'Oyly Carte is as widely known and respected to-day as it was when Sir William Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan were alive. It stands, as it did then, for a degree of efficiency in the art of operatic representation amounting as nearly to perfection as is humanly attainable. That splendid achievement benefits the public and the theatre more than it benefits Mr. Carte, whatever his reward may be. Therefore: Well done, D'Oyly Carte!

* * * * *

Have you ever attended a public or a semi-public luncheon where speeches were taboo? Mr. D'Oyly Carte gave one at the Savoy Hotel to the principals of his company. What a

relief it was ! Good company, good cheer—and nobody making an idiot of himself in his cups !

At the same time, I could not help reflecting that the toast of "The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company" would have provided a wonderful incentive to oratory. The visitors of the occasion, in acclaiming that toast with the enthusiasm it deserves, would have expressed the heartfelt gratitude of a world-public for past delights, and a gleeful anticipation of delights to come. Gilbert himself might have written concerning the present D'Oyly Carte Opera Company :—

They are the true embodiment
Of everything that's excellent.

THE STAGE IN THE WAR.

The theatrical profession rendered invaluable service to the country during the war. It fulfilled its mission of keeping the public happy and bright through good and ill report, and it did so in the face of many grave discouragements and not a little actual peril.

Amusing and cheering the people is, however, the theatre's vocation. In other ways it responded even more nobly to the call of national duty. In the first year of the war, fifteen hundred out of eight thousand actors voluntarily joined the colours. By April 1916 there were more than two thousand actors at the front.

A list of names of theatrical workers who made the great sacrifice in the war, numbering several hundreds, is inscribed on a memorial panel in Drury Lane Theatre.

Many players, happily, more than did their bit and have lived to tell their story, notably Robert Loraine, the gallant actor-airman. Others devoted the whole of their time and ability to war work at home and abroad.

"The people of the stage," said General Ashmore, "have done much to maintain a spirit of optimism in the country, and especially in London." They achieved that useful end mainly by the presentation of plays and entertainments of the gayest description. Our war-time theatre was purposely frivolous and irresponsible, for it provided "what the public wanted."

For that reason, principally, the war-time theatre produced little that was not ephemeral. The older school of dramatists,

with the exception of Sir James Barrie, gave nothing really enduring to the stage. Sir Arthur Pinero's contributions were "The Big Drum" and "The Freaks." Mr. Bernard Shaw forsook the footlights for polemics. Mr. R. C. Carton contented himself with "The Off-Chance."

Sir James Barrie, on the other hand, emerged from the war period with added distinction to his name. He had three plays running simultaneously at West End theatres in 1916, and his record comprises three masterly full-length comedies, "Dear Brutus" "A Kiss for Cinderella" "Mary Rose" and three short war pieces, "Der Tag," "The Old Lady Shows Her Medals," and "A Well-Remembered Voice."

For the rest, the war theatre's claim to remembrance chiefly lay in its amiable addiction to spy plays, bedroom farces, American crook dramas, and ephemeral revues and musical comedies.

WAR PERIOD VOGUES.

I.—BEDROOM PLAYS.*

It was difficult, at the height of the war period, to avoid the American bedroom farces at the London theatres. At one time there were bedroom scenes with unblushing displays of pyjamas running concurrently at the Prince of Wales, Apollo, Playhouse and Palace. The bedrooms at the first two theatres were sumptuously furnished interiors; in the other two the rooms were indicated by six or eight doors opening on semi-circular landings. In the interior scenes of "Be Careful, Baby!" and "Fair and Warmer," erring spouses popped in and out of each other's retiring rooms more or less indiscriminately.

These doubtful productions enjoyed immunity from critical attack. The fear of being considered prudish was an effective deterrent. Wit and humour, too, were more than ordinarily welcome in those anxious times, and the bedroom plays were, with one or two exceptions, decidedly amusing.

The long arm of coincidence was noticeable in the details of bedroom scenes in "The Naughty Wife" (Playhouse) and "Very Good Eddie" (Palace). As the lover at The Playhouse, Mr. Stanley Logan had to make a coaxing noise out-

* See also "Up in Mabel's Room," page 89.

side his friend's wife's door, whereupon the friend (Sir Charles Hawtrey) unexpectedly appeared in his shirt-sleeves and inquired in accents of deadly coolness, what the h—— he wanted! At the Palace, Mr. Nelson Keys also cooed at the keyhole of another man's wife's bedroom. "Honey, honey!" he crooned in dulcet tones, whereupon the lady appeared and protested that hers was a bedroom, not a beehive!

Another coincidental happening in the theatres was a rapid succession of "drunk" scenes. We had them in "Fair and Warmer" at the Prince of Wales, "The Lilac Domino" at the Empire, "Very Good Eddie" at the Palace, and "Violette" at the Lyric. Miss Clara Butterworth, at the Empire, illustrated the effects of a first bottle of champagne on a virginal constitution. Mr. George Barrett, slightly elevated at the Apollo, struggled gamely with the word "unsophisticated." Miss Fay Compton, at the Prince of Wales, found a sequence of cocktails inimical to the proper pronunciation of "prejudice" and "perfectly delicious." Mr. Nelson Keys, at the Palace, stuttered in his cups, "It is highly prob-probable that I am just a wee bit tip-tipsy."

II.—SPY PLAYS.

Another interesting feature of the war period was the vogue of spy plays. It began with "The Man Who Stayed at Home," and continued almost without intermission until Armistice Day. These exciting dramas presented a weird assortment of styles, ranging from Sir Hall Caine's "The Prime Minister," pretentious and characteristically rhetorical, to Mr. Austin Page's "By Pigeon Post," homely, colloquial, direct in its appeal.

There were lots of quiet fun in the spy plays for professional secret service agents. In all of them, without exception, the plots were thickened by a lavish employment of cyphers, codes, cryptograms, signals, and wireless messages. The majority of those devices were hardly of Bernstorffian craftsmanship—and that was where the fun came in for the professional secret service agents.

A code incident in "The Freedom of the Seas" was the transmission by wireless to a German submarine of the following message:—

"Fish before soup twelve precisely. Wrapped in blue and gold no one told London 1666."

Fortunately the message fell into the hands of a British sub-lieutenant who had made a hobby of acrostics and puzzles. It would probably have caused a real secret service man a considerable amount of mental perturbation. Not so our amateur detective, who interpreted it on the spot.

“London 1666” instantly conjured up visions of the Fire of London. “No one told,” applied to that conflagration, can only have meant “fire without warning.” Other deductions resulted in this total decodement:—

“Course changed. Sailing due north. Naval officer in charge. Fire without warning.”

“Allies propose landing on the Murman coast” was another spy message decoded. It occurred in a play called “The Live Wire,” and the cypher was embedded in this apparently patriotic sentence in a newspaper leading article:

“Forewarned is forearmed: sevenfold shall their retribution be.”

A journalistic spy had been conveying British State secrets to Germany through the medium of his articles. The method would appear to have been clumsy enough, judging by the celerity (stage time again!) with which certain significant fourteenth and twenty-fourth words in the articles were fastened on by the amateur detectives of the piece.

The rage for codes and cyphers crossed the Atlantic. New York’s most popular war spy mystery play was “Three Faces East.” The title was the password of a gang of German super-spies operating in England, and the answer was Forwards and Back, whatever that may have meant, for the critics were apparently as puzzled as the audience. Anyway, the bandying about of these mysterious messages very nearly resulted in the blowing up of Mr. Lloyd George and the whole British Cabinet by a gigantic infernal machine ticking in a cellar!

III.—NAVAL PLAYS.

We have yet to see on the stage a Naval play really worthy of the senior service. It is curiously anomalous, in a nation of seafarers, that nautical drama has never been an instrument in the development of the British theatre.

There was a sequence of interesting Naval plays in West End theatres during the war. It began with a skilfully written comedy-drama, “The Freedom of the Seas,” by

Walter Hackett, which had a good run at the Haymarket. "In the Night Watch," a melodramatic thriller from the French, also held the boards for a considerable period at the Oxford. "The Luck of the Navy," with a strong spy interest, was popular at several London theatres and in Canada; but "Jolly Jack Tar," a hybrid concoction, exploiting comedy, drama, song, music, dancing and "the pictures," quickly came to grief at the Princes.

It is remarkable, indeed, how few plays dealing with the sea have won enduring popularity. In recent times the list is almost confined to "The Flag Lieutenant," "H.M.S. Pinafore," "The Harbour Lights," and "Billee Taylor." Moreover, no great actor since T. P. Cooke has succeeded in impressing his personality on the public in sailor parts. William Terriss specialised in sailors in the Sims and Pettitt days at the Adelphi, but he hardly created a furore, like T. P. Cooke. Lewis Waller's effort in "The Little Admiral" was ephemeral, and even Forbes-Robertson failed to rescue the hero of Trafalgar from stage neglect in "Nelson's Enchantress."

At one period, however—during the eighteenth-century naval wars—the stage did reflect to a fair extent the national genius for the sea. Dibdin's naval spectacles had an invigorating topical value, although their crudeness and technical incorrectness were ludicrously apparent to professional seafarers. In the nineteenth century the outstanding sailor play was "Black Ey'd Susan; or, All in the Downs." Douglas Jerrold, the author, and T. P. Cooke, the immortal sailor-hero William, had both been in the Navy—hence, no doubt, the singular excellence of their work.

Drury Lane, as the national theatre, has not so far justified its appellation by giving us a great naval play. Such efforts as "A Sailor and His Lass" and "A Sailor's Knot," did not remotely approach the ideal.

ASIDES AND SOLILOQUIES.*

Several contemporary dramatists have shown a disposition to revive the old-fashioned aside and soliloquy. Mr. Matheson Lang had a soliloquy lasting a quarter of an hour in "Christopher Sly." There was an even longer one in

* Reprinted from "The Sporting Times."

“Wat Tyler” at the Old Vic, while in “The Ninth Earl,” by Rudolf Besier and May Edginton, and in “A Family Man,” by John Galsworthy, those discredited devices were resorted to very frequently. I was so puzzled by their adoption by a dramatist of Mr. Galworthy’s modernity that I asked the producer of “A Family Man,” Mr. Norman McKinnel, for an explanation.

“An aside,” Mr. McKinnel replied, “is presumably a speech spoken by an actor when there are others present with him on the stage, which, by dramatic licence, is not supposed to be heard by those others. I am not aware that there is any example of that in Mr. Galsworthy’s ‘A Family Man.’”

“A soliloquy is a speech spoken by an actor when he is alone on the stage. There are, I think, four cases in the play in which the actor or actress expresses his or her thoughts in a sentence, in each case not exceeding six words; and, by straining the point, it would be just as possible to define these instances as examples of the soliloquy.

“It is a perfectly natural thing for a man to express his thoughts aloud under stress of emotion of some kind, but he seldom does so to the extent of more than one sentence. In every case in the Galsworthy play it might be possible to express that by pantomime, but that is not either a very popular or, as a rule, a very successful method on the English stage.

“The soliloquies employed in ‘The Ninth Earl,’ were perfectly natural, as the character who used them had suffered a long period of solitary confinement; and it is a well-known fact that that often influences a habit of talking to oneself.”

Mr. McKinnel’s explanation strikes me as sound, and it is of great interest to stage technicians. Nearly everybody occasionally speaks aloud to himself under stress of emotion; consequently, the absolute barring of the soliloquy by advanced dramatists is untrue to life.

THE LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS.

A fascinating feature of “Deburau” at the Ambassadors was the light it purported to throw on the history of the grand coquette, Marie Duplessis, the original of the soiled dove in “Camille,” “La Dame aux Camélias,” “La Traviata,” and “Heartsease”—a heroine variously styled Camille, Marguerite Gautier, and Violetta. We learned in Guitry’s play that it

was the pierrot Jean Gaspard Deburaud, who, on presenting Duplessis with a flower, named her the lady with the camellia.

The incident, so famous in the theatre, occurred during the following passage of dialogue, which is doubly worth quoting as illustrating Mr. Granville Barker's much-debated mode of metrical translation :—

Deburaud—There is a name that I give you then . . . a sort of a name.

Marie Duplessis—Tell me—tell me. Oh, what fun !

Deburaud—A name is a name if it tells,
Conjures up in its very sound.

The very picture—complete in its frame—
Of its owner. What do you think I found
For a name to think of you by ?
My lady with the camellia.

Marie Duplessis—Why ?

Deburaud—Because I shall always see you
As first I saw you stand
With the flickering light upon you
And that flower in your hand.

I have said “famous in the theatre” advisedly. Miss Madge Titheradge is the latest of a long line of celebrated actresses who have moved millions to tears over the woes of Marguerite Gautier since the first enactment of the role by Eugenie Doche at the Paris Vaudeville in 1852.

The mere recital of those actresses' names conjures up visions of superlatively emotional acting. Among the great Camilles and Marguerite Gautiers and Violettas have been the following :—Sarah Bernhardt, Helena Modjeska, Eleonora Duse, Jane Hading, Adelina Patti, Etelka Gerster (Patti's rival in the role), Tetrazzini, Clara Morris, Fanny Davenport, Ethel Barrymore, Mme. Réjane, Mrs. Brown Potter, and Lydia Yavorska.

The Armands, too ! Forbes-Robertson for one. Kyrle Bellew another, and now young Ivor Novello. There is material in the subject for a book.

DO WE LACK GOOD ACTRESSES ?

A chiel has been amang us, takin' notes.

He is the Canadian and New York actor-manager, Mr. Edward H. Robins, who, on his return to Canada, said he had seen about thirty plays in London. “I was impressed,” he

remarked, " by the richness of the London stage in fine actors of all types and ages, but the younger actresses do not seem to measure up to the standard of the famous English women of the older generation."

Our kindly critic did not institute a comparison of names, without which it was difficult to arrive at an opinion in the matter.

The "older generation" of English actresses, who were at their heyday in the later Victorian period, would include the following:—Ellen Terry, Mrs. Kendal, Lady Bancroft, Genevieve Ward, Mrs. Bernard Beere, Mrs. Calvert, Marion Terry, Nellie Farren, Mrs. John Wood, Lydia Thompson, Jennie Lee, Mary Moore, Lottie Venne.

In place of that constellation of greatness and talent, the London playbills to-day contain the names of the following actresses of the younger generation:—Marie Löhr, Iris Hoey, Sybil Thorndike, José Collins, Cathleen Nesbitt, Elizabeth Irving, Betty Chester, Kyrle Bellew, Dorothy Minto, Edyth Goodall, Muriel Pratt, Irene Rooke, Florence Saunders, Gladys Cooper, Madge Titheradge, Renée Kelly, Fay Compton, Meggie Albanesi, Edna Best, Faith Celli, Cicely Debenham, Maggie Teyte, Viola Tree, Edith Evans.

In addition many English actresses are at the zenith of their careers, notably:—Irene Vanbrugh, Julia Neilson, Lena Ashwell, Lillah McCarthy, Lady Tree, Lilian Braithwaite, Ethel Irving, Mrs. Patrick Campbell, Lily Brayton, Constance Collier, Violet Vanbrugh, Ellis Jeffreys.

All these are names to conjure with. The younger generation of English actresses may yet survive the ordeal of comparison with the older. When Mr. Robins visits us again he may have reason to revise his views.

"EYE-WORK."

The outstanding performance of a busy Christmas week (1921) was Mr. Norman McKinnel's nonagenarian Oliver Blayds in Mr. Milne's comedy, "The Truth About Blayds." What an achievement! The actor was only on the stage about twenty minutes, but in that brief space of time he limned a portrait of secretive senility that will haunt the memory for years. If the play is still running, watch Mr. McKinnel's "eye-work"!

Nearly every great actor has been gifted with wonderful

eyes—Garrick especially. His biographers dilate admiringly on their size and sparkle. Kean's piercing gaze in tragedy was employed with devastating effect. I remember as though it were yesterday the filmy, bleary glaze that came over Irving's eyes when, as the murderer Dubosc, his tongue lolled at the brandy bottle. I have heard of actors—Mr. Arthur Bourchier has told me of one—who only fell short of greatness because their eyes were deficient in magnetism.

In the case of Mr. McKinnel, Oliver Blayds' guilty soul leaps to his eyes. It speaks to the suspecting onlooker in sidelong glances and quailing, apprehensive looks, while his feebly twitching hand on an arm of the invalid's chair tells dumbly of the turmoil in the sinner's breast.

"HIDEOUS APPARITION, AVAUNT!"

The stage joke of the period was Mrs. Asquith's appearance at Devonshire House as the Silent Lady of Deadman's Lane in Bulwer Lytton's "Not So Bad as We Seem." This would-be fearsome character was intended to give the audience the creeps. It induced instead an agony of internal mirth which, at one priceless moment, resolutely refused to be suppressed.

Before I come to that moment I wish to disabuse the reader of any idea that Mrs. Asquith's performance was a responsible factor in the irreverent laughter it provoked. It was the author's fault entirely; for in "Not So Bad As We Seem," one of the worst plays constructionally that I have seen in forty years of theatre-going, Mrs. Asquith played her part in the spirit of its intention, and fully according to its deserts.

The Silent Lady was a wife, who, many years before the period of the play, was erroneously believed to have been unfaithful to her marriage vow. Appropriately enough, a book of memoirs, written by the nobleman who was supposed to have betrayed her, contained the Silent Lady's exoneration, and the action of the piece was mainly concerned with the acquisition of the memoirs, coupled with the subsidiary interest of a Jacobite plot.

So the Silent Lady, while her reputation was under a cloud, secluded herself in the street portentously called Deadman's Lane. She made, however, periodical excursions therefrom, heavily veiled in black, her features hidden by a visor. Thus attired, she would cross and recross the window of her husband's abode, making an admonitory gesture, which was

supposed to chill the observer, who believed that he beheld a spectre.

The people on the stage appeared to be duly impressed, but the nerves of the audience were unwrung. On the contrary, there was no resisting the unintentional humour of the situation when a man who saw the "spectre" declared that, although nobody could say of him that he was not brave, he wilted at "an ugly black face peering in at the window." Then the priceless moment followed—in Deadman's Lane. There the "spectre" crossed the path of a lackey. "Hideous apparition, avaunt!" the minion exclaimed; then fled the scene, shouting that he would "go home to his mother!"

Oh, Bulwer Lytton! Bulwer Lytton, oh!

The dialogue of "Not So Bad As We Seem" is excruciatingly inflated. I admired the indomitable way in which Mr. Ivor Novello and his colleagues kept their faces while speaking such lines as:—

"There never was such a fellow as I am for crime and audacity. . . . Ho, lackeys, my coach!" "Scheme now, plotting brain! Dare now, stubborn will!" "So, so! My choice is made. I am armed at all points; I str-r-r-rike for victory!"

And, oh! the asides and soliloquies, and the thees and the thous! There are probably in the script more sentences in parentheses than out of them. One of them was particularly precious, inasmuch as it contained in a nutshell the whole spirit of this resurrected piece of Victorian balderdash. Mr. Harold Terry (who acted rather well) delivered it as follows, after striking the necessary attitude:—

"(Aside).—The plot thickens around me!"

As they say in the comic papers, 'Nuff sed!

A NOTORIOUS FIRST NIGHT.

The most astonishing disturbance witnessed in an English theatre since the Old Prices riots at Covent Garden—which lasted from September to December in 1809—took place at the Garrick Theatre on Thursday evening, April 29th, 1920. It ended in the stoppage of the play and the dismissal of the audience half way through the performance.

Miss Laurette Taylor was making her reappearance in London after several years' absence in a new play by her

husband, Mr. J. Hartley Manners, entitled "One Night in Rome." The piece was presented by Mr. Charles B. Cochran.

The origin of the disgraceful scene, during which stink bombs were thrown from the gallery, has not to this day been publicly explained.

The trouble began on the rise of the curtain. Hardly a word had been spoken on the stage when a voice in the gallery exclaimed, "Raise the curtain. We can't see the stage."

The audience then observed that the act-drop had not ascended more than one-third of the proscenium height. If it had been raised any higher the "flies" would probably have been exposed to view above the ceiling of the scene—a low-built interior representing a palmist's room, a striking apartment with purple hangings and the mystic appurtenances of a professional clairvoyante—the character played by Miss Taylor.

"What a charming room!" said one of the characters as he entered.

"We can't see it; raise the curtain!" replied the gallery.

A little later another character remarked of the palmist, "She makes it difficult for people to see her," an observation which provoked a roar of laughter in the gallery.

"Give the play a chance!" said someone.

"Give us a chance of seeing it!" retorted the gallery.

A third unfortunate remark by one of the characters (played by Mr. Arthur Wontner), "What a horrible room!" was received by the malcontents with exclamations of delight.

Then the gallery apparently resigned itself to the situation. the play was allowed to proceed in quiet for about half an hour, until the end of the act.

On the fall of the act-drop, all the principals acknowledged enthusiastic calls. When Miss Taylor's turn arrived, at the end of the procession of players, she was greeted with an ovation.

"I'm awfully sorry about this," she said, pointing to the curtain. "In the next act we will have it higher. The scenery was made in America—where we do things so small. We didn't know we were coming into a theatre so high."

(The Garrick Theatre, it should be mentioned, has three tiers—dress circle, upper circle, and gallery.)

Miss Taylor retired amid the plaudits of the whole house.

Directly the curtain rose on the second act, about nine

o'clock, the storm broke out again, more violently than before. It raged incessantly until 9.30.

"Shut up and go back to America!" shouted the gallery. A performer, Mr. Barry Baxter, began to play the violin. The strains of the instrument were drowned in cat-calls, and coppers were thrown on the stage.

At this juncture there was a good deal of sneezing and coughing in the auditorium. I was among the afflicted members of the audience. I had to bury my face in my handkerchief for fully ten minutes. Both stink bombs and "electric snuff" were thrown from the gallery.

The uproar had now become so great that the performance could not be continued. Miss Taylor, greatly agitated, entered and advanced to the footlights.

"If all you people who cannot see will come downstairs," she said, "you shall have seats in the orchestra stalls to-morrow night."

Mr. Cochran then appeared. Taking Miss Taylor by the hand, he began to speak.

Miss Taylor interrupted him.

Addressing the audience she said, brokenly "It isn't like England for you to do this."

Mr. Cochran went on.

"I have brought Miss Taylor, this great artist, so beloved, three thousand miles to appear here to-night," he said. "I will not allow her to appear amid this scene of disorder. I have decided, therefore, to ring the curtain down and to dismiss this audience to-night."

The announcement was received with some commotion, and a few moments after the curtain had fallen it was rung up again, and Mr. Cochran reappeared.

"Why not let every one upstairs go?" shouted a man in the stalls. The suggestion was cheered by stalls, pit, and circle, which showed their antipathy to the gallery in loud expressions of disgust.

"It's not us," shouted a galleryite. "It's an organised gang at the back."

"I'm not blaming anybody," said Mr. Cochran. "I am only saying that I will not allow Miss Taylor to continue after the strain she has undergone. There will be another first night of this play. The scenery will be altered to allow of the line of sight from the gallery.

"I am told now that the gallery can see. Whether that is so or not, Miss Taylor is not going to continue this performance to-night."

The curtain was rung down again for the last time. A voice called "Three cheers for Miss Taylor!" They were given very heartily. The band played the National Anthem.

The gallery and the upper circle were immediately cleared, but the people in the circle, pit, and stalls remained in the auditorium for about twenty minutes, discussing the affair with considerable agitation.

Meanwhile the vestibule was besieged by excited pittites and galleryites, giving their views of Miss Laurette Taylor, and expressing the opinion that the riot was "a put-up job."

A number of stink bombs and other missiles were found in the auditorium.

* * * * *

The Garrick rumpus was the most sensational theatre incident witnessed in this country within living memory. I had a seat in the centre of the stalls, and took a full note of the proceedings from the rise to the fall of the curtain.

All the evidence pointed to a put-up job. The discovery of "stink-bombs" seemed to prove that conclusively. I must admit, however, that during the disturbance itself I suspected nothing more than ordinary resentment by the gallery because they could not see the stage.

In my opinion that resentment was justified. Judging by the position of the act-drop and border, less than half-way up the proscenium, the opening scene of the play, "One Night in Rome," could not possibly have been visible to people at the back of the gallery. They probably only saw a few feet beyond the footlights. Their objections, at first, appeared to me to be spontaneous.

The "organised opposition" factor in the affair was a different matter. It could not be defended in any way. The ebullitions of the gang were a disgraceful exhibition of bad manners.

If the gang intended to wreck the play, their purpose was merely assisted, not provoked, by the fortuitous circumstance of an apparently faulty piece of stage-management. They succeeded in wrecking the play. That was a criminal offence, and the wrongdoers should have been convicted and punished.

“One Night in Rome,” had progressed only as far as the beginning of the second of its three acts when the curtain was finally rung down. Miss Taylor, in spite of her obvious distress, was winning her way to the audience’s heart. Not a single dissentient voice marred the cheers which greeted her when the play was stopped.

* * * * *

This deplorable affair was, however, “enjoyable” compared with some of my experiences in West End theatres during the war period. Several first nights were played to the “music” of crashing bombs—the one at the Alhambra, for example, when Mr. Robey prevented a stampede in the gallery by admonishing the gods to “Shurrup!” That was a nasty sensation, too, at the Strand, when two jokers rushed into the auditorium from the street and shouted, “Fire!” A fire panic at the Whitechapel Pavilion, when an audience of East Enders got “cold feet,” was also a creepy business. One of the rowdiest “receptions” I have witnessed in recent years was on the opening night of the Strand, then the Whitney, when a musical comedy was almost booed off the stage. Another roundly execrated piece was Mr. de Courville’s first revue at the Prince of Wales’. I praised several features of the show in my criticism, and A. de C. afterwards told me that he picked out those portions, composed them into a music-hall revue, and made a little fortune out of them on tour.

The first night of Pinero’s “The ‘Mind the Paint’ Girl” at the Duke of York’s in 1912 was the last occasion I believe on which a London gallery gave a really detestable exhibition of bad manners. Two Irish pieces, “The Playboy of the Western World” and “General John Regan,” were fruitful in disturbances. Most playgoers have heard of the terrible Old Price riots at Covent Garden, which continued night after night for weeks in 1809. During the eighteenth century fights and disturbances were almost everyday affairs in the London theatres, particularly at Drury Lane.

Probably the most serious theatre riot on record occurred at the “Lane” in 1737, when about thirty persons were dangerously wounded in the fray. A small army of aggrieved footmen, armed with sticks and staves, broke open the doors and attacked the audience and players. Garrick’s friends

in 1743 employed thirty prizefighters, who engaged in deadly combat in the pit of Drury Lane with a similar band of pugilists employed by adherents of Macklin. A Drury Lane audience of 1740, disappointed by the non-appearance of a dancer, carefully handed the ladies out of the pit, and then, led by a noble marquis, smashed the musical instruments, pulled down the decorations and fittings, broke up the benches and destroyed everything they could lay their hands on.

But those, of course, were "the good old days" !

PROMISING NEW PLAYWRIGHTS.

“Facility will come with practice, and strength and fortitude with repeated effort.”

LORD LYNDHURST.

CHAPTER V

PROMISING NEW PLAYWRIGHTS

REGINALD BERKELEY.

A NEW dramatist of exceptional promise was discovered in Mr. Reginald Berkeley, who, in an admirable little speech, modest and well-delivered, acknowledged the author's call after the production of "French Leave," at the Globe.

Mr. Berkeley is a young barrister, a member of the Inner Temple, and of the New Zealand Bar. He was in the Rifle Brigade—a brigade-major of the Fourth Army. He wrote "French Leave" while invalided behind the lines during the battle of the Somme.

"French Leave" went with a roar. There was a laugh or a smile in almost every line.

Miss Renée Kelly was a newly married English girl, who transgressed the military regulations by joining her husband, Captain Glenister, in his rest billet. The husband, alarmed by her unexpected appearance in the mess room of his brigade, agreed to an imposture, in the hope of avoiding court-martial.

Mrs. Glenister posed as a Parisian actress visiting her "mother," the landlady of the billet. She acted the part so coquettishly that she soon had all Captain Glenister's comrades at her feet. The jolly, blustering old brigadier-general (delightfully performed by Mr. M. R. Morand) and the acting staff captain (vivaciously played by Mr. Henry Kendall) were enraptured with the dainty "Parisienne."

In the night there were terrible complications. There was a regular epidemic of insomnia among the smitten officers. As a character observed, "people began to fall downstairs in relays." However, all ended happily the next day, thanks to the smitten general.

Miss Kelly had a captivating part, and she played it captivatingly. Mr. Charles Groves and Mr. Arthur Riscoe were also highly successful as a mess corporal and a mess waiter. The applause, like the laughter, was unrestrained.

NOEL COWARD.

Two clever first plays by unknown dramatists at the fag-end of a disastrous season was a bit of a pill for the pessimists. The first was "French Leave," by Reginald Berkeley. The second, produced at the New Theatre, was "I'll Leave It To You," by the then twenty-year-old actor-author, Noel Coward.

Mr. Coward's play, a light comedy with a tendency to farce, created hearty laughter, and the author was called enthusiastically. The humour, if elementary, was bright and unforced. The situations were neatly contrived. A little more farcical "punch," and the laughter would have been uproarious.

Mr. Holman Clark had another of his jovial soul parts in Uncle Daniel from South America. Uncle Dan told his young nephews and nieces that the doctors gave him only three years to live. He would, therefore, bequeath his fortune to the niece or nephew who first "made good" in life—the youngsters being inclined to indolence.

He left it to them, and the scheme proved successful, but the path to the happy ending was paved with prevarications for Uncle Dan. Mr. Clark has rarely been more amusing. Miss Kate Cutler was also entertaining as a fluffy-headed mother in the manner of Miss Mary Moore.

OLGA RACSTER AND JESSICA GROVE.

A "breeches part" of uncommon interest was admirably played by Miss Sybil Thorndike in the title-role of "Dr. James Barry" at a charity matinée at the St. James's Theatre.

If the incidents of this new play by Olga Racster and Jessica Grove had been presented as fiction, they would have been derided as wildly improbable. Based on fact, they constitute an amazing chapter in the history of male impersonation.

Dr. Barry was a woman who lived as a man all her life. She rose to eminence as an Army surgeon in South Africa, ending her career as Inspector-General of the Army Medical Forces, and her sex was not discovered until her death in London, when she had passed her sixtieth year.

The mystery attaching to her act of sex renunciation was never solved. In the play it is suggested that she fled from

a brutal husband, disguised herself as a man, and entered the medical profession. She is seen holding her own and dominating the male society of Government House, Cape-town, and even fighting a duel with a blustering suitor who insulted a young protégée of hers. The episode of her death and revelation of sex many years later is enacted in an epilogue.

The play was well written and dramatic, but episodical. The tone was grey and sad, in spite of the bright uniforms and costumes of the Waterloo period.

Miss Thorndike's womanly lapse into hysterics after the duel was a fine moment in a sound impersonation. Manner, voice, gait—all were convincing ; and the actress looked the character perfectly in red wig, cocked hat, scarlet-lined black cloak over a crimson tail-coat, tight white breeches, top boots, and spurs.

ODETTE TCHERNINE.

The girl author, Odette Tchernine, showed a subtle insight into the psychology of married life in her first play, "The Storm," which was produced at the Ambassadors Theatre. Her little study of clashing marital temperaments was well observed ; but a commonplace story of domestic infelicity, with its Lyceum episodes of quarrelling and reconciliation, did not assimilate convincingly with an undercurrent of the supernatural.

The piece was intended to be a play of atmosphere—mystic, laden with foreboding. Its action, in a seaside cottage, passed in a raging storm, in half-lights accentuated by shafts of green limelight when at intervals a Barriesque Dream Child appeared—a fair, Ophelia-like girl, carrying bright spring flowers.

As in "On Trial," the action shuttlecocked to and fro between the present and the past. The Dream Child's hypnotic power caused the husband and wife to re-enact in a vision the unhappy events of seven years previously when they quarrelled and parted. She typified the spirit of good in them, and in the end her influence prevailed, for, as she said, "Human beings must meet each other half way."

There was imagination enough, and Miss Tchernine may be counselled to persevere.

NITA FAYDON.

Aleen Dennison (Miss Iris Hoey) was lucky as well as lonely as the wife in "The Lonely Wife"—Nita Faydon's first play, which was produced at a charity matinée at the Comedy Theatre. Her idea of obtaining relief from the domestic boredom inflicted on her by her golf-mad husband was to advertise as follows:—

"Lonely lady would like to meet a gentleman or sympathetic companion for walks once a week."

Fortunately for Aleen, the man who met her at the Savoy Hotel in reply to the advertisement was a confederate of the husband.

The silly young wife would have been well served if the confederate really had been the thief and blackguard he pretended to be. That was the weakness of the play—its failure to inspire an atom of sympathy for either wife or husband, each as dunderheaded as the other. Otherwise the comedy was full of promise—amazingly written and neatly constructed. The best thing in it was Miss Jean Cadell's laughable study of a fussy spinster.

MARCHIONESS TOWNSHEND.

The Marchioness Townshend wrote an enjoyable play called "The Fold." It was a work of considerable merit, replete with attractive stage humanity, lightly humorous, cleverly satirical, pleasantly "produced" and performed, but rather lacking in distinction. The audience at the Queen's Theatre laughed and sympathised, and called the authoress, who made a neat little speech from behind a pyramid of bouquets.

Mr. Godfrey Tearle and Miss Hilda Trevelyan were a schoolmaster and his wife. The young pedagogue's lines were cast in the unpleasant places of a chapel-going set, who served as a butt for Lady Townshend's satire. Her picture of suburban narrow-mindedness was deliberately overdrawn, but vastly entertaining, and no doubt there is more than a grain of truth in her gallery of snivelling caricatures.

A flamboyant Russian dancer, spiritedly played by Mlle. Ratmirova, lured the schoolmaster from the fold. She lured him to a life of "purple pleasure" in her London flat, a won-

derful pink-and-gold apartment, with black alcoves, cushions, lampshades of deep cerise, and a ceiling representing a black, starry sky. There he valiantly resisted the siren's wiles ; and, in Act IV., he returned unspotted to the fold and to a Christmassy reconciliation with his wife.

Miss Trevelyan was delightful as the patient little wife fighting for her happiness. Mr. Tearle, Mr. Sydney Paxton, Mr. Holman Clark, and Mr. Stanley Drewitt also made the most of their excellent opportunities.

THE HON. MRS. MONTAGU.

The Playwrights' Theatre Society produced a promising first play by the Hon. Mrs. Gerald Montagu—sister-in-law to Lord Swaythling and the Secretary of State for India.

Mrs. Montagu's interesting piece, "Mother Eve," was held up by the censor because of its outspoken treatment of matters relating to sex and matrimony, but there was nothing indelicate in the play as presented. The dialogue was less startling than that of some recent sex dramas and comedies.

A wealthy employer, Sir Philip Cartaret, had a dissatisfied wife. Lady Evelyn Cartaret (Eve) wished to be something more than a rich man's darling. She longed to be of use in the world, and decided to throw in her lot with a league of social reform whose principles were directly opposed to Sir Philip's.

The deserted husband turned for consolation to a former flame, the notorious Mrs. Astley, who was a guest in the house. Mrs. Astley, a friend of Lady Cartaret, was in the act of repulsing him in her bedroom, when the wife appeared on the scene.

Reconciliation was facilitated by the existence of a child of the marriage. Lady Cartaret awakened to the realisation that "a mother's best work was through the spirit of her son." As the curtain fell, husband and wife saw the child in the garden and they went to meet him hand in hand.

Mrs. Montagu writes well and has a turn of humour, but the play was faultily constructed. The action in the middle of the piece was much as it was at the beginning, and there was insufficient compensation in the intervening dialogues for this slowness of movement.

The author's strength lay in her feminine psychology.

Lady Cartaret, her whimsical mother, and the notorious Mrs. Astley were humanly drawn creations, charmingly performed by Miss Mary Merrall, Miss Edith Evans and Miss Ruth Mackay.

MACDONALD WATSON.

Mr. Macdonald Watson, the young author of "Hunky Dory," a new Scottish comedy which went rather well at the Kingsway Theatre, may one day write a play as good as "Bunty Pulls the Strings."

Mr. Dory was a shaggy, red-headed, red-whiskered disciple of John Barleycorn. The old wastrel blackmailed a neighbour, and put his lodger under the necessity of keeping three-halfpence in his pocket to produce as his last coppers whenever Hunky came a-borrowing.

The lodger, played by the author, was a lovable fellow, chiefly on account of his blank imperviousness to all sense of humour. All the players spoke the Lowland dialect delightfully, and the piece had a good reception.

ERNEST CECIL.

There were many excellent qualities in "A Matter of Fact," a first play by an unknown author, Ernest Cecil, at the Comedy Theatre, but unfortunately the defects outweighed the excellences.

The plot was too intricate, the misunderstandings were so unnecessary, and the long arm of coincidence was sorely stretched. Yet the play had "grip" and a pleasing strain of humour, while several of the situations, regarded apart from the main improbabilities, were powerfully and tensely emotional.

Miss Eva Moore was splendid in those particular situations. She was our old friend, the woman with a past. After twenty years of perfect married life, Lady Marlow was confronted with the awful predicament of having to sanction or refuse the marriage of a daughter to a young man whom she believed to be her illegitimate son.

It is conceivable that such a circumstance would arise in real life. It was almost inconceivable in the working out of the play that the young man should not be the woman's son after all, but a misunderstanding in human form created with a view to a happy ending.

Mr. Norman McKinnel's business as Sir Philip Marlow, the husband, was to probe the mystery of his wife's passionate objection to what appeared to be an ideal marriage—for he was unaware of the skeleton in the cupboard. The actor performed his task with a quiet force and an artistic restraint delightful to see and hear. The love scenes between the bewildered and distracted young couple, admirably played by Mr. Francis Lister and Miss Pamela Cooper, were another attractive element in the piece, which was favourably—and at times enthusiastically—received.

KENNETH BARNES.

The fashionable cult of mental healing known as psycho-analysis formed the subject of elaborate discussion in a new play, entitled "Undercurrents," by Kenneth Barnes, at the theatre of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

A doctor, unqualified from the point of view of medical etiquette, applied the treatment of psycho-analysis to a young woman suffering from neurosis.

He succeeded in extracting from the patient the cause of her secret affliction. She was suffering agonies of remorse because she believed that the man she loved—killed in the war—had deliberately sought death when he learned that she was affianced to another.

Consolation for the bereaved one came eventually not from the psycho-analyst, but from a clergyman, and she remained true to her lost love, discarding two suitors—including the psycho-analyst—as the curtain fell.

An audience of theatrical connoisseurs listened with intense appreciation to the thoughtful, well-written play. It may have little or no value as popular drama, but it should be useful for repertory purposes.

REV. A. M. DALE AND ELLIOT STANNARD.

The authors' call after the production of "The Muddler," at the Garrick Theatre, was acknowledged by the Rev. A. M. Dale and Mr. Elliot Stannard (son of John Strange Winter). If Mr. Dale was materially responsible for the portrait of a clergyman in the play, he is a welcome addition to the ranks of parson-playwrights, of whom there have been more than a few—several of them successful.

The clergyman was the muddler. Mr. Charles Windermere made the Rev. Edward Freeling, Rector of Leysham, a human, lovable man, far removed from the typical stage parson. The reverend gentleman's method was everything all over the place. His congregation had to enter the church by the chancel because he locked the porch. He even attempted to marry a girl to the best man.

His saving grace was an abounding sense of humour. He had a smile and a joke for everybody, even for the scoundrelly parishioner who tried to ruin him because he mislaid £500 in notes. A villain with less of the Lyceum about him would have known from the first that the notes had been merely muddled by the muddler, and not misappropriated.

The play, like the parson, was lovable, but fragile. Its drawbacks were obviousness and absence of "punch."

ALMA FAULKNER AND OSWALD CURTIS.

A capital little Chinese fantasy, produced by the Playwrights Theatre, "The Bluebeard Touch," might have been entitled, alternatively, "The 'Mikado' Touch," its atmosphere was so Gilbertianly reminiscent of the town of Titipu.

The resemblance, however, implies no reflection on the youthful authors of the piece, Alma Faulkner and Oswald Curtis. It was worthily Gilbertian, and commendable in every way.

Miss Iris Hoey exercised the Bluebeard touch as an Emperor's daughter with a passion for as many husbands as she could get. The heads of five husbands who had been summarily disposed of were paraded in jars, with their pigtails protruding, while the sixth was being despatched by poison in the presence of his prospective successor.

The business was carried on with a delicious inconsequentiality which provoked a good deal of laughter, but the theme is too tenuous for a full-length play. It was exceedingly well acted, especially by Miss Hoey, Mr. Laurence Hanray (the Emperor), Mr. Francis Lister (the lover), and Mr. William Armstrong as a bored stage director with a wholesome contempt for his actors.

I. A. R. WYLIE.

Miss I. A. R. Wylie, a writer of Indian novels, showed decided promise as a dramatist in her first play, "Rendez-

vous," produced by the Repertory Players. The little piece had atmosphere and grip, and it imparted a genuine thrill.

Miss Wylie, however, should have made it clear to the audience in the first of the play's two scenes that the commercial traveller who flirted with a Frenchwoman in a ruined French village was a German ex-officer. The pre-knowledge would have heightened the effect of the second scene, in which the officer, in an eerie environment, was hounded to his death by a group of demented women who had been driven out of their minds when he sacked and set fire to the village in the war. That was a tensely dramatic situation in the Grand Guignol fashion—worthy, indeed, of the Little Theatre.

A. L. BURKE.

Mr. F. J. Nettlefold's pertinacious efforts to please London playgoers were at last rewarded with a measure of success. His discovery of Mr. A. L. Burke, the author of "Thank You, Phillips," was a feather in his managerial cap.

Mr. Burke can write good comedy. His humour has style and savour. A flow of natural wit is steadily maintained throughout a series of ingenious situations which never deteriorate into farce. If the acting and general presentation had been less deliberate the author's call would have been even more enthusiastic than it was.

Phillips (Mr. Nettlefold) was a valet-butler who "knew his master's mind as a terrier does his master's voice." An actor whose speciality is fluffy-headed dudes, Mr. John Deverell was the master—who first was married, then more married, then much married.

Just when he was approaching the much-married stage Phillips, like Bunty, pulled the strings on his behalf. Phillips manœuvred the hurried departure of unwelcome visitors by overdosing them with his Hula Hula cocktail. He had the wife's birthday present handy when the husband had forgotten the natal day.

The necessity for saying "Thank you, Phillips," would have been permanent if the super-resourceful valet had not perceived the advisability of precipitating his own dismissal because he felt himself weakening towards the wife.

EUGENE O'NEILL.

I.

“In the Zone,” a tense little sea episode by the young American dramatist Eugene O’Neill, was easily the pick of “The Pedlar’s Basket” at the Everyman Theatre. It was a model one-act play, perfectly performed.

Seven seamen in the dim fo’c’sle of a tramp steamer entering the war zone with a cargo of dynamite suspected one of their mates. They believed that the black box which he concealed in his bunk was a bomb. It contained, after all, only a packet of love letters.

The seamen were of various nationalities, and their racial idiosyncrasies were capitally portrayed by the group of clever actors. A foul-mouthed little Cockney gave utterance to a flood of Billingsgate, and would have regaled the audience with a good deal more if the censor had not intervened.

Mr. Bernard Shaw, in the audience, must have smiled.

II.

Mr. O’Neill also had his second play in England produced at the Everyman. This two-act drama, “Diff’rent,” was a study in love psychology expressed in the rough-and-ready lingo of an American one-horse town.

The seafaring characters spoke a vile jargon, largely expletivatory, which called for the insertion of a glossary in the programme. Mr. O’Neill is evidently a master of dialect, and his characters are as vividly drawn in their way as Mr. Jacob’s bargees.

Mr. Milton Rosmer and Miss Jean Cadell gave performances of quiet distinction as a pair of thwarted lovers in youth and middle-age, and a young actor, Mr. Leslie Banks, was splendid as a rascally ne’er-do-well disgracing American khaki.

ON AND OFF THE “HALLS.”

“Then try to be happy and gay my boys ;
Remember the world is wide,
And Rome wasn’t built in a day my boys ;
So wait for the turn of the tide.”

OLD MUSIC-HALL SONG.

CHAPTER VI

ON AND OFF THE “HALLS”

INCLUDE me, if you please, among the numerous votaries of pleasure who regret the passing, as music-halls, of the Empire and the Palace. The art of the music-hall flourishes in the suburbs and the provinces, but in Central London it has appreciably declined.

The Tivoli is no more. The London Pavilion and the Oxford are regular theatres. The Empire, Palace and Alhambra are often devoted to musical shows and “pictures.” In the area once served by those six music-halls only the Coliseum and Palladium survive—and the Palladium, when this book appears, may also be a regular theatre.

Thus we have only two West End music-halls (three at the most, if you wish to include the Holborn Empire) in place of the eight or nine of a few years ago!

The Coliseum is all very well in its way. So is the Palladium. But there is no West End habitat for high-class intimate vaudeville.

The intimate West End music-hall of my dream would supply an entertainment blending the comic song turn of the old Tivoli with the smart and racy acts provided at the Palace under the baton of Herman Finck. The ditties of really good red-nosed comedians and Marie Lloydian comediettes would vie with the choicest ballads or the latest instrumental pieces. Everything would be snippy and bright. No performer would occupy the stage longer than fifteen or twenty minutes. “Waits” would be abolished by the use of a revolving stage. There would be spacious lounges, from which the entertainment could be comfortably viewed by casual patrons dropping in for an hour or less.

* * * * *

A true saying about the “halls” is attributed to Moss Empires’ managing director, Mr. R. H. Gillespie.

"The music-hall stage in England," Mr. Gillespie is reported to have remarked, "has become dreary for want of new blood and variety."

Hear, hear!

Not only does it lack new blood. The old blood is in a state of stagnation.

In the Central London halls, week after week, year after year, we see the same old turns performed in the same old way.

We know before the performers come on exactly what they will say or sing and exactly how they will say or sing it.

For that reason, and no other, I systematically avoid music-hall programmes which are composed wholly of familiar names.

In recent weeks the most enjoyable evenings I have spent in music-halls have been at suburban houses like the Shepherd's Bush Empire and the Hammersmith Palace. There I have seen fresh faces, heard new songs and patter, and witnessed novel "acts." In Central London the variety entertainment seems to me to be distinctly on the down-grade. There are no sing-song shows such as those which were wont to set the benches in a roar at the "Tiv." and the "Pav."

There was much virtue, after all, in your red-nosed comedian. He radiated jollity. The efforts of his successors to induce their audiences to join in the choruses are pitiful to behold.

A fortune awaits the man who first provides Central London with an "intimate" music-hall combining the happy-go-lucky irresponsibility of the Tivoli with the briskness and smartness of the Palace—the Palace as we knew and loved it in the days of Herman Finck and his heart-searching "Melodious Memories."

"SIR HARRY,"

The outstanding genius of the contemporary music-hall stage, Sir Harry Lauder, does not come within the scope of the above criticism.

The man whom Scotland gave to the world in addition to Bobbie Burns and the great Sir Walter, stood one morning among two score Press chiefs takin' notes in a reception room at the Palace Theatre.

Sir Harry wore the kilt and sporran. He smoked a briar pipe ten inches long. His placid, unwrinkled countenance bespoke content. He jested unsmilingly. The humour was effortless, spontaneous, flowing.

Lauder's age is fifty-two. He remarked in cross-examination that he felt like twenty-five.

"Sir Harry," I said, "how do you account for the fact that you feel like twenty-five?"

"Laddie," he replied, "I've lived a methodical life. I'm an abstemious man. I never drink too much or eat too much. I don't smoke too much; although, mind ye, my wife says that I have only one smoke, and that lasts all day.

"Mind ye," he continued, posing before a camera with a glass in his hand, "mind ye, a wee drap o' Scotch is a fine thing for the cauld. I don't objec' tae a nip. I'd rather hae a nip o' whisky than a spoonful o' chlorodyne.

"If you're fifty, and want to feel like twenty-five, dinna forget the open air. Look at my hands, laddie! Hard work! Cuttin' doun trees, diggin' and delvin'. There isn't any menial work I wadna do. There is nothing a man can do with his hands that he should refuse to do.

"I'm raisin' my glass to the Press. Gather round, laddies—I feel lonely here being photographed by myself. Ye're a mighty engine for good or ill, laddies. The Press! Here's tae ye, boys!"

I wondered whether the next question would be tactful, or in the best of taste.

"How did you get your knighthood, Sir Harry?"

Sir Harry squared himself up. "I got my knighthood," he said, "for services rendered to the country, to the Army and the Navy, apart altogether from the stage. I carried out a propaganda against our enemies that could not have been carried out by any statesman. I addressed the largest audiences in America—twenty thousand at a time. My fund for maimed soldiers and sailors, the Harry Lauder Fund, has reached £115,000.

"A bonnie wee woman collected £6,000 of that amount, standing at stage doors, selling my photographs. When they were autographed they cost 'em more.

"Ye're right. The bonnie wee woman was my wife."

So the Press—that mighty engine for good or ill—raised its glass to Lady Lauder.

“FIRST TURN.”

Every Monday morning at every music-hall in the United Kingdom somebody is asking, “Am I first turn?” If the reply is in the affirmative the unhappy inquirer begs for a change of position in the bill.

The concession is rarely made. Many first-turn artists work under this handicap for years. They cannot win out against it. They lack the initiative to try another job. They cling to their living wage, working twice nightly through five or six minutes of purgatory.

My informant in this matter, Mr. Ernest Butcher, is one of the few who have overcome the handicap. His old-world folk-songs and duets with Miss Muriel George have reached a top-line position on the halls.

Imagine the first turn’s ordeal.

His story, dance, or trick is disturbed by late-comers shuffling to their seats, by the buzz of attendants’ voices, and the clink of coin in exchange for programmes. Despite the ceaseless fidgeting and fumbling, he tries heart and soul to “get over,” but the curtain swings down to a few timid hand-claps, or a silence that shouts defeat.

The fault is not always the artist’s. It is due, more often than not, to his fatal position—first turn. Place the same performer in the middle of the bill, and the difference will be astonishing.

The system is more than unfair. It isn’t human.

It isn’t “good business.” A business man does not first introduce to a customer his least attractive wares.

It isn’t cricket. The poorest batsman does not open an innings, nor the worst bowler bowl the first ball.

There is a cry for fresh talent in the music-halls. Here is a way of finding some, and, at the same time, of giving a chance to deserving artists.

“LADY VESTA TILLEY.”

I have preserved for more than thirty years in my theatrical archives a Vesta Tilley programme. In those days the future star was a girl prodigy. The occasion was a pantomime *première* at the old Alexandra Theatre, Liverpool, and this is how the principal boy part was cast:—

Aladdin.....A lad in whom hopes
are inVestad.....Miss Vesta Tilley.

How splendidly those aspirations were realised! No artist has been more beloved and admired in the music-halls than "the lad in whom hopes were invested"—"Lady Vesta Tilley."

"STOLL" AS IN "DOLL."

I heard Sir Oswald Stoll's name variously pronounced at a public meeting as Stoll (as in "doll"), Stole, and even Stull. It is also variously pronounced by the general public. I have therefore obtained a first-hand ruling in the matter.

"My name," wrote Sir Oswald Stoll in reply to my inquiry, "should rhyme with "doll." It is, I believe, of Danish derivation, and has been borne by me since the days when I was fourteen years old, when my mother married a second time. The name of my stepfather was Stoll. He was an Englishman, but, I believe, had some remote ancestors who were Danes.

"My mother, as you know, is still alive, and was born in Dublin. Her first marriage was to my father, Oswald Gray, who was in Dublin at the time, at Trinity College. He died when he was twenty-seven. His father was Roderick Gray, county surveyor of Fermanagh, bank director, and so forth. He resided for many years at Enniskillen."

My courteous correspondent signed his interesting letter "Oswald Stoll (i.e., Gray)."

HOW THEY BEGAN.

“Success means everything to any man who is worth his salt.”

CHAPTER VII

HOW THEY BEGAN.

VAULTING ambition o'erleaps itself more often in the theatrical profession than in any other walk of life. A prevalent notion that the art of acting can be acquired more easily than any other is the cause of much of the overcrowding with which the stage is afflicted. It cannot be too earnestly discounted. The lesson of the following autobiographical series should be carefully digested by stage aspirants. All the famous artists who tell us "How They Began" have been thoroughly through the mill, and have risen on the stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things. Proficiency in the art of acting can only be acquired in the school of hard endeavour.

MISS IRENE VANBRUGH.

"How did I begin? How does a dream start? How does the quest for the end of the rainbow formulate itself in the head of a child? It is something you have heard of, something you feel, something you know is real, but to which you can give no name, and which would elude you if you did.

"Acting, the most ephemeral of all arts, is part of your being or it is nothing. The only answer would be: After years of devotion you feel you have never begun."

MR. ARTHUR BOURCHIER.

"On the eve of becoming personal secretary to a certain great statesman, I took part in some amateur theatricals (having previously founded the O.U.D.S.). at which the late Marchioness of Ripon was present. A fortnight later I received a most flattering offer from Mrs. Langtry (Lady de Bathe), who told me that Lady Ripon had been kind enough

to speak highly of me as a budding actor. My father strongly objected. To allay his scruples, I accepted Mrs. Langtry's offer tentatively, and opened at the Theatre Royal, Wolverhampton, in a play by Mr. Sydney Grundy, entitled 'Esther Sandraz,' and in the same week played Jaques in 'As You Like It,' under the stage name of 'Mr. Baron.'

"Later in the tour my father came to see me, and Mrs. Langtry told him that if I could open with her in London under my own name, she would guarantee me a year's engagement at a salary which certainly, in those days, was beyond the dreams of avarice. After some days' hesitation, my father agreed to my consulting the great statesman, who advised me to adopt the stage as a profession, although he was kind enough to add that personally he wished otherwise. Consequently, when Mrs. Langtry opened at the St. James' Theatre with 'As You Like It,' I made my bow to the London public as a professional actor in the ambitious character of Jaques."

MISS LILLAH McCARTHY.

"My first effort in public was made at the age of eight, as a Cheltenham schoolgirl in a fairy play. My father encouraged me by paying one shilling for every hundred lines I learned of Shakespeare.

"When I was eleven I had mastered the whole of 'Julius Caesar,' 'Macbeth,' and 'Romeo and Juliet.' Those studies, followed by lessons in elocution from Herman Vezin, laid the foundations of my career.

"At thirteen I was making a fair amount of money by reciting at concerts in and around Cheltenham and Gloucester. My family then came to London, and I saw my first play 'Hypatia,' at the Haymarket.

"When I was sixteen, I played Lady Macbeth at the St. George's Hall, Langham-place, in aid of the fund to raise a memorial to Mrs. Siddons, whose tomb at Paddington Green was covered with a flat stone.

"Mr. Bernard Shaw saw the performance. He wrote in the *Saturday Review* that, while I did everything wrongly, yet I could hold an audience spellbound. He said afterwards that he thought my age was about twenty-four.

"As a result of that performance Mr. Ben Greet offered me the position in his company of leading lady, then held by

Miss Dorothea Baird, who was leaving to go to Tree. I accepted—at a salary of £2 10s. a week.

“Two weeks before the tour started Mr. Greet asked me if I had my dresses ready. I was expected, it appeared, to provide a wardrobe for the whole repertory of ten plays, including eight of Shakespeare.

“I asked my father for help. He was furious at my decision to play, and refused. However, a sympathetic brother lent me sixteen pounds, and I and a friend sat night and day making my costumes.

“I was ready, if tired, to set out at the appointed time, and made my first appearance on a real stage. The tour lasted six months. During that time I played such parts as Juliet, Beatrice, Desdemona, Ophelia, and Peg Woffington, with H. B. Irving as leading man.

“That was in my seventeenth year. Mr. Wilson Barrett saw me on the tour, and made me his leading lady as Mercia in ‘The Sign of the Cross.’”

MR. MATHESON LANG.

“My father was a parson, and a Scottish one at that, so there was little sympathy at home for a stage-struck youth. Still, when I went out to seek my fortune as an actor my father started me with a five-pound note—the only financial backing I ever had.

“My first appearance was at St. Andrew’s University, with the dramatic society. When I went on as Lorenzo, in ‘The Merchant of Venice,’ I was greeted to my amazement with roars of laughter. My Jessica, it appeared, was the wife of one of our principal professors. I, a first term-man, was making love to an august personage, a situation irresistible to my fellow students.

“However, the love of the theatre was in my blood. My father objected, but fortune favoured me with an introduction to Sir George Alexander. He encouraged me with an offer, which I declined in favour of a prospect of obtaining experience in repertory. Louis Calvert took me on trial for a week in his repertory company. At the end of the week I was placed on salary.

“From Calvert I passed to the Scottish fit-ups, in melodrama alternating with Shakespeare, and thence to Benson.

“I was Mr. Oscar Asche’s first business manager, during a

special week at Wigan. Our company had a week out, and Asche secured the Wigan theatre for two Shakespearean productions. 'Get into a boiled shirt,' said Asche when I approached him, 'and look as ornamental as you can in front of the house.' "

MISS MAUD ALLAN.

"I began by deciding that I would be a solo pianist. On my arrival in Berlin to study at the German Royal Academy of Music I found that there were seventy-seven applicants for seven vacancies in the list of students. I was one of the lucky seven to pass the necessary exams. I studied hard until I was taken ill. My mother came to fetch me away from Berlin, and took me to Italy to recover. Having been forbidden by my doctor to sit at a piano practising, I was taken round to all the famous picture galleries and museums, carrying on my artistic education in that way.

"That was the beginning of my career as a dancer, for this constant study of beautiful pictures and statuary filled me with a desire to re-create in dances the wonderful movements and attitudes of all ages. In Florence, Milan, and Rome I met numbers of artistic people, and on my youthful, impressionable mind the wonder of beautiful things was impressed day by day.

"As a child I loved being in the open air, especially if I could watch waving grass and corn in strong sunshine; and I became convinced that I must reproduce beauty of colour, line, and motion in dancing. Back in Berlin, I took up my music studies again, at the same time working out my ideas for dances. In this I was helped by an old friend, Marcel Remy, a Belgian man of letters, who obtained from the Berlin library old books I should otherwise never have seen, dealing with the physical education of the ancient Greeks, and translated them for me.

"As I could not get old Greek music, I had to combine the best possible music with old-time body movements. Joachim, the famous musician, was much interested in me as a pianist, and to him I confided my ideas for poetic dances. It took me four years to complete my dance technique, based on books, pictures, statues—for I had to create the whole thing for myself, as it was quite different from the technique of the ballet.

"Then I went to Vienna to give my first dance recital, as I had too many friends in Berlin to get an unbiased verdict there. My three recitals in Vienna were successful. Then I returned to Berlin, completing my musical studies after five-and-a-half year's work. After leaving the academy I gave a dance recital there—the first ever given in that home of music.

"Joachim kissed me, prophesying a great future for me. Next came a tour as solo dancer with the Philharmonic Orchestra. I appeared for a season at the Karl Theatre in Vienna, and fulfilled my first music-hall engagement in the same city at the Apollo. In Hamburg I also appeared at a music-hall. Finally I came to the Palace, London—the third music-hall I had danced in—to start my career as London knows it."

MR. LYN HARDING.

Lyn Harding is a compatriot of Mr. Lloyd George, and proud of the fact. He drifted to the stage in a remarkable manner. As an amateur actor he had played many parts in local societies. One of his recreations was attending an evening class where religious subjects were discussed. As a relief from these studies, it was decided to play the Trial scene from "The Merchant of Venice."

A venerable gentleman was given the part of the Duke, chiefly because he had a luxuriant white beard. Although it had been expressly arranged that none of those taking part in the entertainment would appear in costume, Mr. Harding, as Shylock, donned an old dressing-gown of his father's and entered the court carrying a large carving knife and an ancient pair of meat scales.

The affair was under the auspices of the local minister and his deacons, all of whom were present. The minister, although much impressed, regretted the excessive realism. The carving knife he stigmatised as a monstrous weapon.

A year or two later Mr. Harding, while travelling by rail one Sunday afternoon, fell in with a theatrical company. He confided to one of its members that he had done a bit of acting in an amateur way, and as there chanced to be vacant the small part of an old man who had to be strangled in his bed, the manager of "The Grip of Iron," a lurid melodrama, offered him the part and fifteen shillings a week, both of

which the neophyte promptly accepted. The following night he stepped on the stage of the old Theatre Royal, Bristol, a full-fledged actor.

Harding remained a year with 'The Grip of Iron,' playing every male part in the piece, and finishing as its leading man with a testimonial from the company.

He then proceeded to London, but it was many a day before he reached the West End stage.

MISS CARRIE TUBB.

"It is all so long ago that I can scarcely remember. The consciousness of possessing a singing voice must have developed in me quite early, for at the age of eleven or twelve I can remember arranging, with great importance and excitement, to appear at my first concert. It was not, however, until I reached the age of nineteen that I realised I should have to work seriously if I was ever to accomplish anything.

"The way of the artist is often a hard and difficult one. Mine certainly was. All my people objected to the idea of my going on the stage. They placed every possible obstacle in my way; used every persuasion to make me change my mind. I 'discovered' myself; and I was fated to fight my own battle in the pursuit of my career, hampered and thwarted at every step by family opposition. I am happy to say that they are now quite reconciled to my profession.

"At the age of nineteen, then, I was busy studying at the Guildhall School of Music under Frederick Birch. It is perhaps interesting to note that I never had a single lesson abroad. Whatever I am, English training and English methods have made me.

"My first success came when I was playing the Witch in 'Hansel and Gretel' during the Beecham season in 1910. Another followed in 1912 when I sang in oratorio at the Birmingham Festival. Since then my path has been a comparatively easy one."

MR. GEORGE ROBEY.

The Prime Minister of Mirth began his career behind the footlights in a mission hall with a tin roof, near Birmingham. Not as a comedian. He was an amateur mandoline player. In spare time, snatched from his labours as an embryo engineer, Robey joined two youthful friends, and they formed

a trio of mandoline and guitar players. Full of zeal, they frequently inflicted their performances on their friends, and eventually were engaged to appear at a local concert for charity.

They arrived at the mission hall one rainy night, and found a moderate-sized audience and few artists. The rain had frightened most of them away. Mr. Robey and his accomplices duly performed their mandoline and guitar act, and then awaited developments in the artists' room. After a lengthy interval a distracted manager dashed in and inquired if any of them could or would do some sort of turn to help fill out the show till somebody else turned up.

"Yes, George can," said one of the trio. "Go on, George, sing 'em a comic song. You know you can; you often do at home." George obliged. He performed every number of his repertoire—"and what's more, they actually laughed at me!" When he retired the audience asked for more. Stirred by the ease with which people could be amused compared with the labour of learning mandoline solos, Robey promptly forsook his instrument to become a comic singer.

MISS MARGARET COOPER.

"It was on a Sunday, and above all places at a chapel in Ealing. I regarded myself as a real, live vocalist, and managed to get an engagement through sheer determination. The man who engaged me to sing was a draper, a Mr. Davis, who lived at the corner of the road where I used to go to school. That was epochs ago, as George Robey would say.

"That Sunday at the chapel I sang 'King of Love my Shepherd' and 'Entreat me not to leave thee,' both by Gounod. Ambitious efforts for a beginner. At the end of my performance they solemnly presented me with ten-and sixpence in an envelope, a golden half-sovereign and a sixpence. I often wish I had that half-sovereign pierced and kept it as a souvenir. After that I did some singing in oratorio, and also at concerts; still as a vocalist, not as an entertainer at the piano.

"I was not satisfied. It was sometimes a toss-up whether accompaniments were well or badly played, and as I played all my own when practising, I began to wonder if I should not be safer playing them myself in public. I would at least know what to expect.

“In 1901—I believe it was at Bridlington—I first sang at the piano to my own accompaniment, and afterwards toured with Mme. Alice Gomez. I played for her all the time, and sang ballads myself, standing up, doing one song at the piano as my encore.

“That always went better than my other work, and I developed this side of my performance till at last I made my first appearance at the Palace in 1906. My career, therefore, is an illustration of the saying that begins, ‘The better the day. . . .’”

MR. HENRY AINLEY.

“I was a bank clerk in Sheffield at the London City and Midland Bank in 1896. After three years’ clerking I took up a position with Messrs. Stanniforth and Ball, stock and share brokers in the same city. It was due to the influence of the late Mr. Sam Walsh, the comedian, who died recently, that I turned my thoughts to the stage. We worked in the same bank, and joined the local Casuals Amateur Dramatic Society. The first part I played in the society was Bennett the butler in Haddon Chambers ‘The Idler.’ The next was the footman in ‘Two Roses.’

“Having discovered my métier, as I thought, I joined Sir Frank Benson’s company in 1899 at the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, but for the first three months my activities were confined to the prompter’s desk—Sir Frank’s favourite method of breaking in a tyro.

“At the end of several years’ hard work with the Benson company, I was seen by one of Sir George Alexander’s managers playing Lorenzo in ‘The Merchant,’ at Deptford. The manager recommended me to Sir George, who engaged me to play Paolo in ‘Paolo and Francesca,’ at the St. James’, in 1902.”

BEATIE AND BABS.

“Just when we first appeared before the public neither of us can remember. We were tiny tots, and had done quite a lot of concert work, when one day a well-known manager, after seeing us perform at a big bazaar at the Manchester Midland, said to mother: ‘Why don’t you let your daughters go on the stage? It’s a pity to let so much talent be wasted.’

“Mother agreed that we’d been doing ‘something for

nothing' quite long enough, and that it would be a pleasant change to do 'something for something.' So we went on the stage, and I think we've done our best to make our fond parent proud of us.

"No, we are not a theatrical family. Mother's an awfully good amateur, though. She recites and does things, and there isn't any doubt, if her parents had allowed her to go on the stage, she'd have made a big name for herself. As it is, she puts her energy into us.

"We never have to worry about anything. Father manages all our business and mother keeps us supplied with encouragement. That is why all our work goes so smoothly. I don't suppose there are many girls on the variety stage who have such a good time as we have.

"Of course, sometimes little mishaps occur. For instance, in America, the Customs held up all our luggage, and it didn't arrive till two minutes before the performance. We had to dress on our way upstairs that night. And in Germany we had a sample of Prussian chivalry. We had put our bags on the seats in a railway compartment to reserve them, and when we returned from the buffet they were gone. Beatie spotted them under the seat, and as she went to rescue them a big German rushed in and nearly throttled her. Then Babs, like a heroine (said Beatie) tugged him by the coat-tails, and exclaimed, '*Qu'est que c'est, ça ?*' till an Englishman in the next compartment came and put an end to the scrimmage."

MR. GEORGE MOZART.

George Mozart at one shilling a night !

He wasn't the George Mozart we all know now. The manager who paid a small boy of ten that princely salary knew him as Dave Gillings, which is the comedian's real name. Anyhow, for one shilling nightly he played the drum in the orchestra at the Theatre Royal, Great Yarmouth.

The orchestra employed four other performers, all bald-headed men. To reach the orchestra, they all had to climb, one at a time, through a small door in full view of the audience. One Saturday night, a rude boy in the gallery yelled, as the first musician made his appearance, "Hi, Bill, there's a bald-headed man come through that there door ! . . . Lor, there's two of 'em . . . three of 'em. . . . Lor-

lumme, there's four bald-headed buffers—and one dirty-nosed little boy ! ” The boy was the future George Mozart.

Then he became a trumpeter in the Prince of Wales’ Old Norfolk Artillery. After purchasing his discharge, he went to Cooke’s Circus, Edinburgh, where he made his first appearance as a professional entertainer in the role of musical clown.

His earnings as a clown enabled him to purchase a tobacconist and hairdresser’s shop. Sunday was the only day he ever did any work in the shop. There was a bit of a rush on Sunday, so he lathered the customers himself, just to help things along.

Finally, Mr. Mozart entered “ the ” profession for good by joining Livermore’s Circus as first violin at thirty shillings a week. His next salary was £2 5s. a week. For that amount—with Poole’s Myriorama—he had to be first violin in the orchestra, do a musical entertainment in which he played twenty different instruments on the stage, parade in the daytime playing the saxhorn, and appear in the principal comedy part in a sketch.

“ Compared with that experience,” he says, “ my present job is taking money for nothing.”

MISS SYDNEY FAIRBROTHER.

“ I owe all I know of the theatre to Mr. Charles Cartwright, a fine actor who died a few years ago.

“ He took me in hand almost in my childhood, and insisted that I should be an actress.

“ The first part I ever played was Kate Merryweather in C. Haddon Chambers’ ‘ The Idler.’ It was under Mr. Cartwright’s management. When I stepped on the stage dressed for the final rehearsal, and hoping for a word of praise from my tutor, he gave me one look and grunted, ‘ Humph ! Haven’t you a mirror in your room ? You look like a stick of asparagus ! ’ Perhaps I did, for I was very thin and angular, and I had on a vivid green dress and an equally vivid hat. His remark hurt my young *amour propre* more than I would have liked him to know.

“ I am a Londoner born, but in order to reach the London stage I found I had to approach it by way of America. I made two professional visits to that country with the Kendals and one with Mr. E. S. Willard. We toured from end to end of the States, until I grew to loathe the very thought of travel.”

MR. ALBERT CHEVALIER.

“I made my first bow to an audience at the age of six,” said Mr. Albert Chevalier.

“My hair was curled, and I wore a velvet suit and shiny shoes as I stood up and recited Mark Antony’s oration over the body of Julius Cæsar.

“Why I had this leaning towards the footlights I do not know. There were no stage traditions in my family, and many of my ancestors had been in the Church. However, my father, a Frenchman, encouraged my amateur performances, which were chiefly in French plays.

“My salary was ten shillings a week when I made my professional début with the Bancrofts.

“It happened in a roundabout way. My father knew old Dion Boucicault. Dion gave me a letter of introduction to Blackmore, father of the present agent. Off I went to Blackmore’s, a fat, chubby, pink-faced boy of sixteen. While I was waiting in the ante-room an old gentleman came in. He went into an inner sanctum, after glancing hurriedly around. The door opened, and some one called, ‘Mr. Knight, please !’

“That was the name I had given—a translation of my own name. In I went. A part was put in my hand. I was engaged for the Bancrofts.

“May I add, after many years’ experience of concert, stage, and music-hall work, that I would sooner play a heavy drama right through twice nightly than do a twenty minutes’ turn on the halls ?”

MISS CECILIA LOFTUS.

“I was at a convent in Blackpool, and left suddenly owing to a breakdown in health. My mother, Marie Loftus, who was on the halls, lost her maid at the time, so I travelled with her helping her to change and running into the wings as quickly and as often as I could, for everything to do with the stage was a great excitement to me. My great ambition was to be an actress and play real parts, but the only chance for me seemed to be to go on the halls like my mother.

“One day, as I stood watching the performance from the wings, a girl came on and did a number of imitations. I thought they were poor, but they went well with the audience.

I said to myself : ' I'm sure you could do better imitations than that if you tried.' So I practised mimicry at home.

" When I had satisfied myself, I went to see the manager of the old Oxford, and asked him to give me his opinion of my 'turn.' He was surprised. ' Why didn't your mother tell me you could do this ? ' he asked. ' She doesn't know I can,' I replied. The end of it was that he came home with me to interview mother. I felt rather scared.

" It was a Thursday evening. The manager said to my mother : ' I'll put her in the bill on Saturday matinée and see how she goes. If it's a success I'll book her for the following week.'

" Next day my mother had a friend in who wrote special songs for her, and the three of us sat up all night arranging the band parts and cutting down one of mother's stage dresses to fit me.

" The act scored an immediate success. I not only got my contract for the Oxford, but in five weeks I was playing four houses a night, and George Edwardes gave me a chance at the Gaiety, where ' In Town ' was running. Within two months I was playing at the Palace, and earning one hundred pounds a week.

" I had attained my ambition, yet I was disappointed, for my great longing had been to go on the legitimate stage. It was nearly a year before the opportunity came, and it was Augustin Daly who gave it to me in the form of a three-year contract to play Shakespearean parts in America."

MR. BILLY MERSON.

" From my earliest years I intended to be a comedian, but in the beginning I looked like being stymied because I couldn't sing in tune ! Everywhere I tried round my native Nottingham I got ' the bird ' for being three tones flat or sharp or something. At last I gave it up, and, with another man, I became an acrobat.

" At this I was more successful. We soon began to make headway. I don't know quite what happened—it may have been that the somersaults settled the sound-box in my head—but shortly after I had started on this career I not only found that I could sing in tune, but that I could compose melodies.

" I reeled off a dozen songs, and was lucky enough to place them with Wilkie Bard, Harry Ford, and other stars of the

day. So successful was one of my compositions that it obtained its fair purchaser ten years' work in London. She bought it from me for five shillings ! That set me thinking. If I could write for other folk I could write for myself. The result was 'She'll think of her soldier boy !' and other numbers, and I soon found myself a star !

"The quickest bit of song-writing and song-producing I ever did was when I composed 'The Good Ship Yacka Hicky Doola' in my car between the house and the theatre. I had the melody taken down on Thursday, I bought the dress on Friday, and produced on Saturday. On the following Monday I sang it at the Palladium ! "

MISS CICELY COURTNEIDGE.

"A child of the theatre," was Miss Courtneidge's description of herself. Her father and mother were both on the stage. Robert Courtneidge, before he became a manager and producer, was an actor, and her mother was Miss Blanche, sister of Ada Blanche.

"But it goes further back than that," said Miss Courtneidge. "My grandmother was a singer. Her name was Cicely Adams, and I am proud to be named after her. She had a lovely voice, and sang in grand opera. So you see I've been mixed up with the stage all my life.

"From the earliest time I can remember I made up my mind to go on the stage. My parents realised that it was useless to prevent me, so they did what many stage parents never do—encouraged me.

"At the age of eight I made my first appearance, to my huge delight, in my father's production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' in Manchester. I played Peasblossom, and was as proud as Punch when I found myself a real live actress.

"The following year I went with my parents to Australia, and played the same part again in Melbourne. By the way, I was born in Australia, at Sydney, in the hotel owned by Mr. Oscar Asche's father.

"After Melbourne I came back to England, and went to school in earnest ; but while I was still a schoolgirl I induced my father to let me play in 'Tom Jones'—my real stage débüt. He gave me a tiny part in the first act only, and when the curtain came down I was relentlessly sent home to bed. Then came Switzerland, where I went to finish my

education. When I came back I played Crysea in 'The Arcadians' at the Shaftesbury—which is the end of the beginning of my story."

MR. ARTHUR PRINCE.

" I began with a bet ; or rather, it was a bet that first started me on the theatrical war-path.

" When I was a callow youth I discovered that I had the power of ' ventriloquising,' so I made a dummy figure, with which I practised hard. Friends told me I would never make enough money to earn a living professionally. I said I would.

" One friend, greatly daring, bet me a fiver that I would not become the best ventriloquist in England within a year. It was arranged that if I was not a real star before twelve months had passed I should pay him five pounds.

" Private shows in friends' houses for tiny fees had been my limit up to that time, but I read in a paper that artists could go to the seaside and make enough in the summer months to keep them through the winter.

" That settled it. Off I went to Bournemouth, and there, on the beach, I put up a trick stage which I had invented, for I was an ardent magician, carpenter, and all-round pierrot, in addition to my ventriloquial stunts.

" Quite happily, I was going to start making my fortune, when I was arrested for putting up a stage without a permit. I didn't know a permit was necessary—the paper hadn't mentioned it ! However, I was not going to be beaten, so I got a proper pitch near Boscombe, collected a small company and set to work.

" We did enormously well—so well, that a man in the show said I'd better make him my manager—it wasn't right for the ' star ' owner to act as his own manager. I agreed, and when the season finished with a nice nest-egg saved up I hired the Gladstone Hall to continue our popular shows.

" The first night arrived. I went to the hall to find the stage absolutely bare—props, dresses, furniture, everything gone ! Also my " manager "—plus the nest-egg that represented my entire fortune.

" It was a ghastly blow, but I wouldn't give in. I worked my way to the midlands, played anyhow and anywhere for any money, and finally came to London, to appear one Saturday night at the South London Music Hall for ten-and-

sixpence. From that show I went steadily on, and before the year was up I was a star turn at the London Pavilion and the Palace, drawing eight pounds a week from each hall—a millionaire ! ”

MISS MAGGIE TEYTE.

“ There was no accident about my choice of a career. I tumbled into opera from the beginning. I am even told that I showed pronounced musical inclinations in the cradle ! Be that as it may, it was at a very tender age that some members of a well-known musical family heard me sing at a school concert, and immediately took an interest in my future.

“ I was sent to Paris to study under the great maestro Jean de Reszke, with whom I remained for two years. I made my stage débüt in Paris, at the Opéra Comique, where I was given several important parts, including that of Melisande in Debussy’s ‘ Pelleas and Melisande.’ ”

“ When I first presented myself, very timidly, at the house of the great composer, he refused to believe that I—the poor little English girl—was to be his prima donna. However, I managed to convince him, and after that he gave me wonderful help and encouragement, so that I went on playing an unbroken sequence of operatic parts in London, New York, Chicago, and other cities.”

MISS DOROTHY MINTO.

“ A little moth danced at a charity show in a Hertfordshire town. The moth was me—Minto—age five.

“ I remember the bouquets, and the way they petted me. I liked it so much that I made many similar appearances.

“ When I was twelve I recited to a London audience at the St. George’s Hall. Miss Fay Compton’s aunt, Mrs. Crowe, who had tutored me, said she was pleased. She had given me a thorough grounding in the stage classics.

“ In the same year I reappeared at St. George’s Hall in ‘ Pygmalion and Galatea,’ and I recollect the difficulty I experienced in kissing a soldier—he was so very tall and I was so very short.

“ At fifteen I was chosen from a large number of candidates to play Juliet at the Royalty. Mr. Bernard Shaw saw me, and congratulated me in a Shavian way. Another member of the audience, Mr. J. E. Vedrenne, offered me an engagement at the Court Theatre.

"There I played such parts as *Hedvig* in Ibsen's 'Wild Duck' (Mr. Matheson Lang in the cast), the title part in 'Prunella,' and Dolly in 'You Never Can Tell'—not a bad year's work. Some of the critics speculated as to whether I was a child or a woman!"

"At sixteen I was lent out to a number of managements, and played a variety of parts at the Haymarket and other theatres. Then, for a change, I went to 'Hullo, Ragtime!' at the Hippodrome. Later, I found myself in the most novel bill of all—the Grand Guignol."

MR. WILL EVANS.

"I wanted to be an actor. I begged, day after day, to be allowed to go on the stage. My father was a clown; he played at Drury Lane for twelve years—and I've played there nine years myself. Therefore, when I was a small boy, I joined my father and played in sketches of an acrobatic kind. In those days I didn't speak on the stage, but learned to tumble, and smile, and use my hands to express things instead of my tongue—pantomimic work, and useful training.

"Never satisfied, I used to be in the theatre every morning at eight o'clock, practising. I had a habit of asking myself questions. 'What can you do?' I would inquire of myself, and the answer was, 'Nothing. Only fall down, and look silly!'

"So I forced myself to learn. Practised dancing; watched other artists, and taught myself to play nearly every kind of musical instrument.

"At last I started on my own, as Evans and Luxmore, with my first wife, and in that capacity played at the Coliseum among other halls as a musical act. It was about 1890, I think, that I went to the Oxford with my musical turn, and from there to the Alhambra for sixteen consecutive weeks. Since when, I have continued to go ahead in the profession I love and was born in."

MISS LILY LONG.

The altitudinous comedienne, Miss Lily Long, is in private life Miss Lily O'Gorman. She assumed her stage name—suggested by her length of limb—when, at the age of fifteen, she started on the halls as a singer of sentimental songs.

Miss Long tells me that she has earned her living on the

stage since childhood. She was a lanky girl of eleven when she called on Professor Lorimer in Liverpool. "What can you do, little girl?" the professor inquired. She promptly turned a catharine wheel and brought down a fine lustre chandelier. In spite of the contretemps, Miss Long was engaged immediately. For several years, as one of the Three Victorias—a song and dance act touring the music-halls—she received one of the lowest salaries on record—sixpence a week and all found.

MR. R. A. ROBERTS.

The clever protean actor of "Dick Turpin" fame, Mr. R. A. Roberts, started his career at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, in a stock company. He was only seventeen, but he always intended to become an actor, so he augmented his knowledge of plays by constant reading while at school.

Mr. Roberts told me that it was no unusual thing for the company to play ten or eleven different plays in the course of a week. He cited the following as an example of one week's work:—

Monday "Othello," and "The Irish Tiger" (an Irish farce).

Tuesday: "Merchant of Venice" and an act from "The School for Scandal."

Wednesday: "Hamlet."

Thursday: "Richelieu" and a burlesque.

Friday: "The Lady of Lyons" and an Irish farce in five scenes.

Saturday: "Richard III."

In those days it was considered that seven men and four women could play any Shakespeare play except "Coriolanus" and "The Tempest." The farces and burlesques were never rehearsed at all; it was taken for granted that members of a competent stock company were qualified to play such productions without previously going through them. As a novice in the company, Mr. Roberts had his pockets sewn up and was expected to call all the elder members of the cast.

MISS IVY ST. HELIER.

"I began during my schooldays. We were at Ramsgate on our summer holidays. I was studying the violin with a view to a fine career on the concert platform.

"They asked me to play at a local charity concert. I did—and sang, too, to my own accompaniment. Somebody in the audience wrote to Mr. Seymour Hicks about it. Mr. Hicks gave me a trial, and arranged to have me trained for the stage.

"I left school in mid-term and entered on a course of training in London. Every day I studied hard at singing, acting, and dancing. My débüt was made at Wyndham's in 'Captain Kidd' in place of Gracie Leigh, who was taken ill. I played the part after five days' study, and the critics said I had started well."

MR. LEON M. LION.

"I come of a Franco-Jewish family. When my ancestors settled in England, their name, Leon, was anglicised to Lion and Leon Marks Lion is my true patronymic.

"Whatever success I may have gained is largely due to the sympathy and encouragement of Sir Herbert Tree, with whom I worked at His Majesty's for a number of years.

"Sir Herbert believed in me. I am proud to remember that he introduced me to an author as 'a man who can make a character out of nothing.'

"At the beginning of my association with him Tree asked me, 'Have you read "The Beloved Vagabond?" Could you play Asticot?'

"'Is it anything like the character in the book,' I inquired
"It is not. Could you?'

"I could! Tree thereupon informed me that he wished the part to be played like 'a cross between a weasel and a marmoset!'

"Sir Herbert wore the managerial purple with a truly regal air, yet he was never really deceived by all the tinsel and glitter. There was always another Tree—a Tree of shrewd insight, with a Puckish humour peeping out and laughing at himself.

"Before I joined Tree, I invariably lived in terror of getting the sack after the second act. Tree gave me confidence. He made me feel that I must be at least a passably good actor.

"Tree was a great graphic artist as well as a fine player. I recall his exclamation to a performer at rehearsal: 'No,

no, no! You give me blue, and I want yellow and pink in your soul!' In that way he gave inimitable expression to his desire for a vivid and violent effect."

MISS MARIE LLOYD.

"I began my career by singing at the 'Free and Easies' which were held on Saturdays and Mondays at the Eagle Assembly Rooms, Shepherdess-walk, Finsbury. The first song I ever attempted was a ballad written by Jessie Acton, called 'In the Good Old Days of Long Ago.' I sang it in the character of an old woman, the only 'props.' I could afford being a black shawl, and a pair of spectacles.

"The ditty caught on, and I was promoted to the Seabright Music Hall in Hackney. The manager of the Seabright was a bit of a character. He used to walk up and down the middle aisle of the hall keeping his house in order. Occasionally he would address the audience in a friendly manner. Pointing with his thumb over his shoulder, he would say, 'What do you think of that for thirty bob?'—referring thereby to the luckless performer's munificent emolument."

MR. HARRY GREEN.

For sheer determination to succeed, Mr. Harry Green's career takes a lot of beating. When I asked the American comedian how he began, he said with simple candour: "When I was thirteen years old my mother worked in a shop to give me a college education. She's in England now, and often comes to laugh at me.

"Mother worked for me like a slave. No wonder she was taken ill. 'Now,' thought I, 'I must do something quick to earn money.'

"I didn't want to discontinue my studies, so I looked around for a job that would give me time to go on with my college work as well. The show business seemed best. At Bayonne, New Jersey, I got a job to present a new monologue at a vaudeville show—at least, it wasn't exactly new. It was a series of the best jokes I'd ever heard or read strung together.

"The manager liked it, anyhow, I got a dinner jacket—my first—and on I went. The audience applauded my first story hard. I got sort of excited, and told the same story again. They laughed, but not so much. I heard some one

yelling at me from the side. That made it worse, but I wouldn't give up. I started in again, and I told the same story once more, not knowing what I was doing. Then the lights went out.

"In the dark I hit out and struck somebody. It turned out to be the manager.

"I ran. I was a champion runner, and I went on running till I remembered I had on a dinner jacket. My private clothes were at the hall. So I went back to get them. The manager fellow, wonderfully magnanimous, gave me a second chance.

"I've never told the same story three times running to the same audience since, and I hope I never shall."

MADAME TAMARA KARSAVINA.

The great Russian dancer, Karsavina, started dancing at the age of eight. A famous master taught the child secretly, at her mother's instigation, because her father dissented. Her progress was so remarkable that, at the end of a year's tuition, a surprise dance arranged for the father's benefit overcame his scruples, and he permitted her to adopt the career of a professional dancer.

Karsavina was a student until her seventeenth year at the Imperial School attached to the Opera House in Petrograd. She made her first appearance as a Cupid in a ballet at the Opera House. From that day her career has been a series of triumphs in all parts of the world.

MR. BASIL RATHBONE.

"Where did I learn the 'business'? In the only school worth anything—on the road. When I left Repton in 1909 my father insisted on a business career. I protested. I wanted to go on the stage, but he assured me that whatever I might do in later life business was always a good beginning. I entered an insurance office, and after a year's misery I left and went to Sir Frank Benson. Fortunately, Sir Frank and I are cousins, and I pleaded for a job. I made my début in the second touring company, at Ipswich, as Hortensio in 'The Taming of the Shrew.' Then followed a succession of minor parts, and I gained invaluable experience. Some nights I would play three different parts. One week it would be a

large theatre, the next week a barn-like hall, and I learned the value of voice production. In 1913 I went to America with Sir Frank Benson, and returned in time to join the London Scottish. Then there is a large gap."

Mr. Rathbone did not tell me that during that "gap" he gained a commission in the Liverpool Scottish and won the M.C.

"When I was demobilised," continued Mr. Rathbone, "I went to Stratford and played during the festival season. My parts were Cassius, Romeo, and Ferdinand. It was there Miss Constance Collier saw me act and engaged me to play Peter Ibbetson. She was unable, however, to obtain a theatre, and Mr. Ainley offered me the part of Cassius. A week before the production of 'Julius Cæsar' Miss Collier found a theatre, and Mr. Ainley released me. I can never be too grateful to him for his kindness and consideration. That, so far, is the story of my brief career."

MISS SYBIL THORNDIKE.

"I took to the stage as a second string. The piano was my first, but soon after my opening recital in London my wrist gave way, and I turned to the theatre instead.

"After a preliminary course under dear old Topham at the Ben Greet Academy, I was shipped off to join Mr. Greet's company in America.

"It was an extraordinary experience. Another girl and I, the only theatricals on board, shared a berth in an old boat from Glasgow which occupied fifteen days in the passage. Then followed a journey right across America to California, to join a strange company in a foreign land and to work at a profession which was then quite new to me, for I had never before left my country vicarage home.

"The work was hard. We had a repertory of about twenty Shakespeare plays, in which we performed for long periods in a new town every day, sometimes two towns a day. Frequently we played pastorals in fields and woods.

"My parts were small ones at first, but in my enthusiasm I learned all the others. Several of the principals broke down under the strain, so I soon got the leads.

"After four years of this strenuous labour I joined the Horniman Company. Then came another year in America with Frohman, followed by the Old Vic. Mr. Cochran brought

me across the water to play in the 'Kiddies in the Ruins' at the Oxford.

"Many of my opportunities in England have been provided by such productions as those of the Pioneers, the Phoenix, and Play Actors. I have always tried, as far as I could, never to refuse a chance of work, and I have not worried about pay or hardship.

"If my career so far has not been a howling financial success, at least it has been full of work and interest."

MR. STANLEY LUPINO.

"Born 1893. Started on the stage at Britannia Theatre, Hoxton, age seven, as a crab in pantomime. Also played a lobster (never eat fish now). Afterwards with father (George Lupino) in sketches on music-halls.

"Started out on own at twelve with an acrobatic troupe, wages five shillings per week.

"Then to Six Brothers Luck in all their sketches. From them to travelling drama; different one each week.

"Juvenile troupe next. Tried a double turn with a man (frost). Tried it again (bigger frost). Went as page-boy at hotel. One week (sacked). Back with Brothers Luck. Left them to play dog in pantomime at Brixton. Went into a sketch (played three nights, paid off). Then to north of Scotland in pantomime. Played cow. Also horse and giant's baby.

"Joined up with partner. Worked clubs, two-and-six a performance. Proceeded to Lyceum to play cat in 'Dick Whittington.' Joined lady partner (success). Went to Africa (big success). Came back, found another partner, started again (frost). Joined a trio. One month (walked back from Tunbridge Wells). Joined a fit-up. No money at end of the week; not much week after; less weeks following. Sold luggage. Came back. Got on engagement at the Empire, London, as understudy. Went on one afternoon. Arthur Collins in front. Saw me. Engaged me for Drury Lane (success).

"Joined 'Honeymoon Express' at the Oxford (big success). Back to Drury Lane (success). Went to Winter Gardens, Blackpool, for John Tiller (success). Single turn (success); Drury Lane (success).

"Joined 'This is the Life' company (big success). Joined

‘ Girl Wanted ’ company (big success). Back to Drury Lane (success).

“ Went to Globe Theatre for Gaby Deslys (big success). Then ‘ Arlette,’ Shaftesbury (very big success). Back to Drury Lane, Widow Twankey (great success). Went to Palace, ‘ Hullo ! America ’ (big success). Drury Lane, ‘ Babes in the Wood ’ (big success). Gaiety, ‘ Kiss Call ’ (success). Drury Lane, ‘ Cinderella ’ (one of my biggest successes). Hippodrome, ‘ Jig-saw ’ (success). ‘ Oh ! Julie,’ Shaftesbury and Princes (success). ‘ It’s All Wrong,’ Queen’s Theatre (colossal success).

‘ Not bad for a beginning ? What ? ’

DRESSING ROOM IMPRESSIONS.

“Hearts that beat true beneath their tinselled robes.”

CHAPTER VIII

DRESSING-ROOM IMPRESSIONS

ROBEY'S PERNICIOUS PAST.

The leading man's dressing-room at the Hippodrome is rather small, but—Od's bodikins!—it contains George Robey. (Swish!)

G.H.Q. were the letters outside the door when Mr. Robey occupied it last. Now the lettering is G.R., short for Georgius (Robeius) Rex.

A neat little model of the door, G.R. and all, hangs on the wall of the room. Every visitor opens it. Then he is confronted with a picture of Mr. Robey in a menacing attitude, with the admonition issuing from his lips: "Shut that — door!"

You glance remorsefully at the door; open, of course. Right on the staircase, too, where the wintry breezes blow.

The inevitable dressing-table mascot is a large, silver bull—the Binghampton Bull. It is inscribed, "To George from Vi and Alf. May this be a mascot and bring you all you wish." It is a valued gift, and Robeius Rex eyes you attentively as you handle it.

Invitations to the social functions of famous institutions are stuck in the mirror. Acceptances and engagements are written on the glass with grease paint. A type-written list of the Robey numbers for the evening finishes at 12a.

Two books are on the dressing-table—John Buchan's "Greenmantle" and a neatly-bound volume by Mr. George Robey, the size of an average six-shilling novel, called "My Pernicious Past." Scenting "copy," you make a quick dive at "My Pernicious Past." The comedian blinks at you furtively.

Every page is a blank! Hundreds of pages, all virginally white! A low chuckle assails you.

You've been "had."

* * * * *

Mr. Arthur Baron has been Mr. George Robey's dresser for twenty-four years. During the whole of that period, he tells me, Mr. Robey never once had occasion to keep the stage waiting. Mr. Baron's most exciting moment is when Mr. Robey rushes in, changes completely, and rushes out all in less than a minute.

There are twelve hats in Mr. Robey's dressing-room, ranging from a grey beaver topper, Johnny Walker style, to the famous shallow bowler which is characteristically Robey. The bowler goes with a collarless clergyman's coat, baggy trousers, wangee cane, and the stage shoes called flaps—a get-up known to every patron of the halls.

"The costume occurred to me," said the comedian, "after I had observed that black and white are the most effective contrasts, for a single turn, against the customary drop scene. I accentuate it facially, too—hence the bare neck and the play of teeth and whites of the eyes."

ACTRESS TO PLAY KING LEAR!

Miss Madge Titheradge had just been torpedoed in a French warship during "In the Night Watch" at the Oxford Theatre when she strolled composedly into her dressing-room. While the guns were booming and the sailors in the sinking ship were singing the "Marseillaise," you gathered from certain indications in the room that its fair occupant had the artistic temperament well developed. A large laurel-crowned bust of Napoleon overlooked a what-not laden with volumes of poetry, chiefly Kipling, Swinburne, and Corneille. On the wall were portraits of Mary Anderson, bearing an affectionate inscription, and of Waller as Henry V.

Miss Titheradge is generally acknowledged to be one of our ablest emotional actresses. She rather surprises you, therefore, when she says that her devouring ambition is to play comedy. "I have never played in comedy, and I believe I could do so successfully. The hit I made some years ago in an agonising court scene in 'The Butterfly on the Wheel' doomed me to a line of intensely serious characters, whereas my personal disposition inclines me to humorous work.

"All the same, I have no desire to act in the American farces which are swamping our stage. I have refused lately

as many as seven offers of the sort from American managers and syndicates.

"I hope that some day I may be able to play a series of Shakespearean male characters to the Shakespeare heroines of my friend, Iris Hoey. We want to give matinée performances of scenes in which I shall play Romeo and Hamlet to Miss Hoey's Juliet and Ophelia, as well as Rosalind to her Celia, the boy Arthur in 'King John,' and King Lear."

Miss Titheradge as King Lear ! In a flowing white beard ! O, to hear her declaiming : "Let not women's weapons, water-drops, stain my man's cheeks ! "

THE GREAT LITTLE TICH.

Although Little Tich's real name is Harry Relph, the costume basket in his dressing-room at the Palladium bore the letters "H. T." Mr. Tich dived into the basket, which would have accommodated half-a-dozen of him, and reappeared with a pair of wooden-soled boots, each about three feet along.

That footgear, with Little Tich perched on its toes, has convulsed whole continents with laughter. A solemn expression in the Lilliputian comedian's face struggled vainly against a dimple in his right cheek. It was a look of wry regret. "They often call 'Boots ! Boots !' in front," he said, "but I haven't done my big-boot dance for years. It's dangerous. I once had a bad fall on a sloping stage. Besides, I can afford to do without it now."

The word "afford" was meant in an artistic sense. Nevertheless, one could not help recalling a county court judge's remark that Little Tich would regard an offer of two hundred pounds a week as an insult.

"When I started in the business, people thought you couldn't be funny unless you had a burnt-cork face. I wore very large shoes as a nigger comedian, and gradually they developed into these.

"Those were the days ! I put in seventeen years at the dear old Tivoli. One engagement there lasted twenty-two weeks, just beating Fragson's record of twenty-one. I would stroll quietly down to the hall after dinner, and just enter into the fun of the thing—like a happy-go-lucky, jolly *soiree*. Now we slave from two till eleven—three performances daily—eighteen a week ! "

The merrymaker grimaced at himself in the mirror, and dabbed at his make-up viciously.

Then the dimple dimpled, and the mobile countenance lighted up with fun.

“ We didn’t have to bother about motor-cars in those days. The other evening I rolled up to the Palladium in a big landauette that carries seven persons. The chauffeur and I had to it ourselves.

“ Two cockney working girls waited expectantly on the pavement. They thought the Prince of Wales at least was in the car. When I alighted—all of me!—they gazed at each other in blank amazement. ‘ Lummy! ’ said one of them, ‘ and that’s all that’s got out! ’ ”

MATHESON’S NOBLE MOOR.

Mr. Matheson Lang, half made-up as Othello, blacked to the waist, was a fearsome object in his dressing-room. The actor is well over six feet in height, and, with his long, lank hair and outstretched arms, he looked like the Wild Man from Borneo. I hesitated on the threshold, but an expansive smile reassured me, and I grasped a welcoming hand.

“ My make-up, ” said Mr. Lang, “ was based on a careful study of Moorish physiognomy. The face should be long and thin, the features aquiline, and I wear a wig with a high forehead.

“ The type is directly opposed to the negroid. I thought of introducing several negroes in the opening scene by way of contrast. Many other details of business occurred to me, but I abandoned them all in favour of directness and simplicity. Traditional productions of ‘ Othello ’ by the greatest actors overwhelm one with ideas for embroideries. It is impossible to utilise them all. Shakespeare seems best when he is least adorned.”

Mr. Lang is a strong man, in the prime of life, of magnificent physique, but he found Othello exhausting. “ No part in any play in our language, ” he said, “ is more exacting, mentally or physically. Salvini, you know, refused to play Othello more than four times a week. There is nothing like the same emotional strain in Hamlet or Macbeth. This man tears himself to tatters. The delight in the doing of it carries an actor through. One experiences a sense of

exhilaration, of exaltation, in endeavouring to realise the poet's sublime conception.

"Our 'Othello' differs mainly from previous representations in the matter of period and costumes. The customary setting is Elizabethan. The play is not strictly dated, so we chose the early mediæval period, not only because it is more picturesque, but because the wild emotion of 'Othello' seemed less suited to the polished Elizabethan time than to the barbaric Middle Ages."

Mr. Lang carefully adjusted his hood. "I made my entrance bareheaded at the first performance," he said. "General Townshend of Kut kindly pointed out to me that no Moor would allow himself to be seen uncovered in similar circumstances, so I adopted the general's suggestion."

JACK POINT AND KO-KO.

The only surviving member of the old Savoy company who is now appearing in Gilbert and Sullivan opera, Mr. Henry A. Lytton, was making up as Ko-Ko at the Princes Theatre. The room contained hundreds of photographs and mementos relating to his stage career of thirty-five years, and among the pictures were several charming paintings in oils from Mr. Lytton's brush. A playbill of the Theatre Royal, Aldershot, dated 1885, was a souvenir of the actor's novitiate. "I appeared in six pieces that evening—comedies, dramas, operettas," he said. "The performance lasted from half-past six till eleven, and was a good example of the grind we underwent in stock company days."

"Our company on that occasion was a commonwealth. I received 7s. 6d. for the week—to keep the wife and baby on! Sometimes we walked from town to town. My experiences also included circus work, such as washing carts and erecting tent-poles. Hope kept me going. 'It will come some day,' I said.

"The partner of my joys and sorrows, Mrs. Lytton, shared my early successes in Gilbert and Sullivan opera. Mrs. Lytton's range of voice was remarkable. She sang in turn the principal soprano, contralto, and soubrette roles."

Mr. Lytton's hair is raven-black although he is fifty-four. "In the profession they call me Peter Pan," he said, "because I refuse to grow up. Many people in front imagine

because they have known me for so many years in Gilbert and Sullivan, that I am almost a centenarian, and they pity me when I have to respond to encores. Their sympathy, you see, isn't really needed.

" My favourite part in the operas is Jack Point in 'The Yeomen of the Guard.' In no other character of the series do you have such a combination of humour and pathos.

" I have played four or five parts in each of the operas. In several of them my appearance is quite transformed. My make-up for King Gama in 'Princess Ida' occupies an hour. Whiskers and eyebrows have to be made, the nose altered, and lumps affixed to the face. As Dick Deadeye, the hands have to be given a twisted appearance, and my height is increased to 6ft. 2ins. when I play the Pirate King."

EDGAR THE FEARLESS.

Mr. G. P. Huntley was donning the bright green doublet and hose of Edgar the Fearless, fancy-dress dude in a Gaiety musical play. A few minutes later he would be sending the audience into convulsions of merriment with the inimitable Huntley drawl—"Bai Jove! I say! What a frightful experience!" Then he would affix his eye-glass and announce, very gravely, that you should always go by Greenwich time, because it is only fair to Greenwich.

How well you know and relish those "Huntleyisms"! I asked "G. P." how it came to pass that he, the erstwhile character actor of the Kendals' company came to identify himself with the noodle type of part in musical comedy.

"The idea came to me," he said, "when I was playing the old-style dude in 'The Ticket-of-Leave Man'—one of those fairwigged idiots who never existed off the stage, even in the Zoo. 'It is time we deviated a bit from this sort of thing,' I said to myself. I thought out a Johnny character on modern lines, and tried out the conception on the captain and the first mate of a tramp steamer during a world tour. If you can make the captain and the mate of a tramp-steamer laugh you are funny enough for anything. They laughed—so my Johnny was all right—and he came to stay."

On the wall, above the dressing-table, were several clever sketches by the late Mr. W. H. Kendal of "G. P." in wonderfully made-up characters. The present generation of playgoers is probably unaware of the variety of parts played

by Mr. Huntley in the 'nineties in such pieces as "A White Lie," "The Ironmaster," "Still Waters Run Deep," and "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray." They may also be surprised to learn that he has been about forty years on the stage, having made his first appearance as a child in "The Octoroon."

Off the stage "G. P.'s" hobbies are racing and Red Indians. He is a recognised authority on the lore and character of the North-West American Indian. His home at Hove is a museum of Red Indian curios—martial trophies, tomahawks, scalp-locks, Sioux arrows, pipes of peace, mocassins, Navajo blankets (one of them a gift from Mrs. Kendal), amulets, feather headdresses, and all the paraphernalia of the wigwam.

Edgar the Fearless, now fully accoutred for the fray, paused in the doorway to tell me this one:—"I was playing old Eccles in an all-star production of 'Caste' in New York. On my previous appearance there, I had played a dude, spick and span. A girl in the audience was taken aback when she saw me as Eccles, dirty and disreputable. 'Say!' she said to her companion. 'Is that the dood we saw last year? My! hasn't he gone off!'"

JOSE IN CLOVER.

The loveliest dressing-room I have ever seen is Miss José Collins' at Daly's. It is a large symmetrical apartment, newly decorated, and the rose du Barri colour scheme tones with the flaming orange costume of the Carmen-esque singer. Carpets, draperies, tablecovers, all are rose du Barri, with a narrow bordering of black. A corner settee, similarly upholstered, is scattered with black cushions. Other corners are occupied by a small grand piano and an elegant Adam bureau laden with books, among them a complete set of Dumas' novels.

Uniformly framed sketches of star actors and actresses by Buchel, Hassall, and Van Dusen, cover the walls. There are about a hundred of these portraits, representing almost every well-known player in London. In addition, autographed photographs of celebrities meet the eye at every turn. One of them is inscribed "to the English thrush" another, Mr. Oscar Asche's, "to a great artist;" another is that of Miss Lottie Collins—José's mother.

This enchanting boudoir is ofttimes a tea-party playground

for children, and the floor is strewn with at least fifty toys—teddy bears, golliwogs, bunnies, and woolly mascots galore. Kewpies, too, on the dressing-table; and everywhere gifts from admirers.

CYRANO AND HIS NOSE.

The kettle was singing on the hob, the table was laid for tea, the cosy dressing room at the Garrick glowed with a grateful warmth, and Lieut.-Colonel Robert Loraine, minus Cyrano's nose, and wearing a comfy dressing-gown, looked like Apollo taking his ease, happily oblivious of the April blizzard outside.

There were no knick-knacks, souvenirs, or mascots in the room—nothing extraneous to the work in hand. The few pictures on the wall were water-colour drawings, beautifully done, of Loraine as Cyrano and of the composer and designer, Nogues and Dulac. Cyrano's large plumed hats and the long rapier with which he is supposed to put one hundred bravoes to flight were almost the only visible evidences of a strenuous three-hours' traffic of the stage.

The principal evidence, the Nose, lurked behind a rouge-pot. It was not nearly as large as you had imagined. The material is silver, covered with grease-paint. Your thoughts were anything but poetic as you handled it gingerly, but you did experience a subtle sense of awe. How wonderful that a noble play, a great stage poem, a superb piece of acting should have been composed around that ugly, unhuman Thing !

“ Cyrano is the longest part in all Drama,” said Loraine. “ Few people know that Henry Irving acquired the play for the Lyceum, but I understand that he turned it down because at that period of his career he felt himself unequal to the strain of acting it. What would Irving have done with Cyrano ? I wonder !

“ I cannot help feeling a little proud of the play's triumph, because everybody discouraged me from producing it during the ten years I held the rights. It was the same with ‘ Man and Superman’ ; yet my production of that play in the United States broke every kind of record over there.”

CHIEF TRAMP HARRY TATE.

The Roll of the Dirty Old Tramps was the first thing that caught your eye in Mr. Harry Tate's dressing-room at the Hippodrome after you had got over the agreeable surprise of

seeing the comedian without his famous swivel moustache, Mr. Tate pulled down the roll, which was like a small window-blind, about two feet square, surmounted by D.O.T. in gilt letters.

It was covered with signatures of celebrities, all Dirty Old Tramps—a Tatian fraternity whose guinea subscriptions are devoted to charities. Admiral Beatty was a D.O.T. Among the signatories were the Polar hero, Commander Evans, a couple of V.C.'s, and Captain Bruce Bairnsfather, who also contributed a sketch with the greeting, "Cheer Oh!" Miss Shirley Kellogg's autograph was sprawled right across the blind, with Mr. Albert de Courville's tucked away tinily in one of its flourishes. There was also a D.O.T. certificate of membership, drawn by John Hassall and signed by Chief Tramp Harry Tate.

Mr. Tate was in this otherwise ordinary dressing-room when the war started, and he remained there through the whole period without missing one of the twice-daily performances. Ordinary, did I say? I am forgetting the comedian's "office" adjoining. It was furnished in Tatian fashion. A roll-top desk was all right barring the top, the laths of which were in shreds. Harry thrusts his hands among the laths to get at a typewriter, and the pieces of springy wood played about his head like lengths of leaping elastic. "I've nothing against the typewriter," said Mr. Tate, "except that it's full of snuff."

HER LADYSHIP'S LEDGERS.

Ledgers in an actress' dressing-room! A pile of them on the mantelpiece, a despatch case bursting with papers, a waste-paper basket, a stack of 'scripts on the dressing-table—these betokened the business woman "whose keen instinct and sound judgment," Sir Charles Wyndham once remarked, "materially contributed to the success of my management." The room was Lady Wyndham's, at the Criterion Theatre.

Miss Mary Moore, as her ladyship is still styled in the play-bills, dictated important instructions regarding the future of the New Theatre while her dresser was putting the finishing touches to her stage attire. Her son, Mr. Bronson Albery, ran through the contents of the despatch case, and details of managerial policy were settled by rapid question and answer.

"I do these things not because I like it," said the actress "but because I must. My real love is acting, not business. My idea of perfect happiness would be to have a good part to perform without managerial distractions. Still, the combination of responsibilities has been a great relief to me since the loss of Sir Charles."

Do not imagine, however, that the feminine touch was negligible in the room. Miss Moore prided herself on a delicate lace cover to her dressing-table.

Little sprays of white heather were attached to lamp brackets and mirrors. A toy mascot on the wall, a bunch of rhododendrons from her Sunningdale home—these were the really essential adjuncts. The one and only picture in the room—the last photograph taken of Sir Charles Wyndham—constituted a more truly human touch than a wilderness of ledgers.

A MATINEE IDOL.

It was just possible to get a glimpse of Mr. Owen Nares, almost buried in letters and sheets of paper.

"Nine hundred and forty-five pounds, nine hundred and ninety-five—just five pounds short of another thousand. Not so bad for one morning's 'Victory Loan,'" said Mr. Nares, "and now to these others," and as quickly as possible he appended his autograph to a great heap of photographs.

"This is my regular daily task. I have crowds of applications for my autograph, but I insist that in exchange some contribution must be made to the Actors' Orphanage."

Mr. Nares' dressing-room was radiantly bright. There were a number of photographs—it was easy to see that the actor is a family man—and one or two mascots.

Over his table was a little brown shoe. "That," explained Mr. Nares, "is the first shoe David—my son and heir—ever put on." On the tag is the inscription: "One of the most priceless things we send you for luck.—Marie, David, and Geoffrey. Please take care of it."

"You see, I'm superstitious. Black cats galore, and a Buddha with a joss stick. This glass shoe, sent me on the first night of 'The Cinderella Man,' is made of one solid piece, and was the only one procurable in London: and this gold shoe was an anonymous gift. Every first night some

unknown friend sends me a gift. I wish I knew who it is, because I would like to tell them that this or that little mascot has brought me luck."

JUST AN ENGLISH GIRL.

Miss Winifred Barnes is a typical English girl—the embodiment of the poet's "nut-brown maid"—a bonny brunette, with perfect oval features and eyes so large and beautiful that the spell of their enchantment lingers in the memory. Miss Barnes made the prettiest picture imaginable in her blue-and-white cretonne dressing-room, amid dazzling lights and flowers and frocks of lovely hues.

Miss Barnes touched wood! "This is only the seventh play in which I have appeared in my ten years on the stage," she said, "so I have had my share of successes—touch wood! I am ambitious, but I am quite content to play nice English girls of the *ingénue* type. It pleases me to think that audiences like me in that way.

"I realise, though, that ambition can only be attained by work. The higher the star, the greater the work. That is why I have just been studying music and singing for four months with Jean de Reszke in Paris, and I intend to return for another course as soon as I can.

"I started in the chorus, you know. They picked me out of the chorus of 'Our Miss Gibbs' at the Gaiety in 1909. That encouraged me. I took singing lessons, and four years later George Edwardes gave me a succession of principal parts in musical comedies at Daly's. It was there, eventually, that I made my greatest hit, as Betty.

"My one 'straight' part—with Hawtrey in 'Anthony in Wonderland'—was also an encouraging experience, and if the legitimate stage calls me again, I shall be ready."

There were two black cats on the dressing-table. They reminded Miss Barnes of the Sunday morning before the production of "Maggie." "I was playing golf at Eastbourne," she said. "We were six miles from the nearest house, so you can imagine my surprise when a dear little black kitten came up to me on the links. After that, I quite expected to make a success as Maggie."

The success was duly achieved—and maybe the kitten had less to do with it than Winifred Barnes—assisted by Jean de Reszke.

"HERE WE ARE AGAIN!"

"I have appeared before all the crowned heads of Europe, Asia, and Wigan," said Mr. Whimsical Walker.*

He was putting the final touches to his costume as the clown in the Drury Lane pantomime. "I've painted this old face for fifty years," he continued, "and I've been the clown at the 'Lane' for nearly a quarter of a century. Herbert Campbell, Dan Leno—all the lights of Gus Harris' days—were my colleagues in the pantomimes."

Whimsical Walker was justifiably proud of his make-up. I looked at it closely, and discovered it to be a work of art.

The eyelids were coloured with the delicacy of a Meissonier miniature. "I take an hour every time I paint my face as 'Joey.' The red lines are done with Chinese vermillion, a rare preparation. The brilliant white complexion is obtained by the application of white bismuth."

The clown of clowns proceeded to give a learned dissertation on the derivation of various details of his familiar horned wig. They caricatured, it seemed, portions of the dandies' dress of the seventeenth century—"about 1640, the year before I was born." That applied to the pigtail particularly. Originally the pigtail figured in an altogether different part of the male attire, and its transference to the headdress by the Grimaldis of the period was regarded as an excruciatingly funny conceit. Thomas Dawson Walker was "Whimmie's" real name. It was his sixty-fifth year, and he celebrated his jubilee as a public entertainer in 1915. During his long professional career he had been clown, comedian, tragedian, animal trainer, bare-back rider, and circus manager.

He ran away from home and got married at the age of sixteen. He witnessed the assassination of President Garfield, performed for many seasons at Hengler's Circus on the site of the Palladium, purchased the celebrated elephant Jumbo for Barnum and Bailey, and appeared before Queen Victoria, the Czar of Russia, and numerous other royalties.

"Queen Victoria" he said, "gave me a scarfpin containing thirty-six diamonds."

Mr. Walker's first Drury Lane pantomime was "Beauty and the Beast." in 1890. Miss Vesta Tilley was the Prince and Miss Belle Bilton (afterwards Lady Clancarty) the Beauty.

* "Whimsical Walker's" reminiscences, illustrated, are published by Mr. Stanley Paul under the title, "From Sawdust to Windsor Castle."

HON. LIEUT. GLADYS COOPER.

An enormous fancy horse-shoe hangs over the lintel outside the door of Miss Gladys Cooper's dressing-room at The Playhouse, and on its square-headed nails the names of plays in which Miss Cooper has appeared at that theatre are inscribed. "One of them ran successfully all through the air raids," says the beautiful actress.

The dressing-room is a combination of tidy office and cosy boudoir, with a brightly-lighted making-up room attached. Portraits of theatrical celebrities, autographed to the actress-manager, crowd the walls. Interspersed among the knick-knacks are numerous photographs of Miss Cooper's pretty children. The collection of grotesque black cats which completely covers the top of a wardrobe are gifts from her children, one for luck from each child on the occasion of every *première* at which mother appeared.

"To Gladys Cooper from R.L., Somme Battle" is the inscription on an ink-bottle made out of the nose of a German shell—a gift from Mr. Robert Loraine. A remarkable relic in a prominent position is a German shell which was picked up at Ypres. It bears the inscription: "Presented to Hon. Lieut. Gladys Cooper by her fellow-officers of the 2nd Inf. Brigade, A.I.F."

Miss Cooper pulls down a parchment roll which is fixed on the door. The roll is headed "Friends," and it is covered with autographs of famous people who have visited the dressing-room. The name of Clara Butt Rumford looms large in the centre. Poor Basil Hallam's is near the top. The first signature is J. M. Barrie's; one of the latest is Mr. Lloyd George's, close to Mr. Winston Churchill's.

KNOCKED 'EM IN THE OLD KENT ROAD.

There was a holiday queue for "My Old Dutch," at the Lyceum, extending completely round the island block of buildings. The sight suggested that Mr. Albert Chevalier as the coster hero in that play was enjoying the time of his life. The actor, beaming with happiness, did not want to be ungrateful. "But really," he said, "no artist has suffered more than myself from a 'label.'

"I have repeatedly had to tear myself out of a rut. First, the managers and public would have me in nothing but

French characters. Next I was glued to burlesque. Then I could obtain no parts but crusty old gentlemen. Now, for many years, since I 'Knocked 'em in the Old Kent-road,' I have been tied to the role of a coster.

"Many people believe that I am, or have been, actually a coster. One authority said he often bought vegetables from my father's barrow! I overheard two typical costers discussing my performance. 'Bill,' says one 'they tells me as 'ow this 'ere feller was once a coster like you and me.' 'Yus,' said Bill, 'lucky for 'im, wasn't it?'

"I became a coster comedian because the attire struck me as picturesque. Look at this coster coat. Notice the broad skirt and the long waistcoat high at the neck. Take away the pearlys, imagine the addition of lace ruffles, and you have a fashionable London coat of the reign of George III.

"No, I am not ungrateful to the coster. At the same time I am too much in love with my art to take a pride in a single method of expression. I revel in character studies of every description.

"As a student of acting I have my own theory of the art, and it does not agree with Diderot's. He laid it down that all acting is merely simulating. I believe that the actor must 'feel' his part, but have his emotions under control. One gulp properly gulped is worth any amount of literary and 'artistic' expression."

LOTTIE—NOT CHARLOTTE—VENNE.

A red velvet pig and a sprig of white heather on Miss Lottie Venne's dressing-table may had have something to do with her success in "The Romantic Age," especially as the pig had been the comedienne's dressing-room companion for twenty years.

But I had my doubts. Miss Venne seemed rather taken aback when I declared myself a sceptic, but she eventually conceded that—well, yes—perhaps—very likely—the success was possibly due as much to Lottie Venne's art as to the influence of the red velvet pig and the heather.

Miss Venne is essentially a London actress, for all the characters she has played have been created by her chiefly on the London stage. I say "chiefly" because Lottie Venne is peculiarly a London idol. She has only acted in the provinces on fugitive occasions, while America is totally

unacquainted with her inimitable art ; but that is America's loss, not ours.

Miss Venne resolutely refused to talk about herself. That has been said a hundred times of the subjects of theatrical interviews. This time it is true. She was eloquent enough about "The Romantic Age" and Mr. Arthur Wontner, but when it came to Lottie Venne. . . .

Her sense of humour, however, could not resist just one little story at her own expense.

"I suggested one day to Mr. Cyril Maude," she said, "that the name Lottie had ceased to be appropriate to me. 'Why don't you bill me as Charlotte Venne ?' I asked. 'Charlotte is such a nice name—it means graciousness—and it is ever so much more dignified.'

"'Yes, dear,' Mr. Maude replied. 'I will do so—provided you will take ten pounds a week less.'"

Consequently there is still only one Lottie Venne.

FIFTY YEARS A COMEDIAN.

At four o'clock one morning, Mr. Arthur Roberts added to the hilarity of a theatrical supper party by dancing a fox-trot with Miss Viola Tree. He turned up at the London Pavilion for the next performance as fresh as the proverbial daisy.

The comedian confessed that he has been addicted to that sort of thing more or less during the greater part of his seventy years ; yet his hair is still black and plentiful, and his vitality comparatively unimpaired.

No sandboy was ever jollier. What could be the secret of his perennial youth ?

"Many years ago," he said, "I ran across a patriarchal farmer, ninety years old at least. He had bright eyes, cheeks like red apples, a firm handgrip, and a lively turn of speech. I asked him how he did it. He replied—

'A pleasant wit and a merry tongue,
You never get old ; you're always young.'

The couplet was new to me. It may have been the farmer's own. Anyway, I adopted it as my motto—and here I am.

"I've been fifty years on the stage. Here is a list of the parts I have played."

Mr. Roberts handed me a "Who's Who" cutting. It was

a column long—a list of several hundred characters created by the comedian in as many pieces, principally burlesques.

That reminded me of my interview with Mr. Albert Chevalier. "Arthur Roberts," said Chevalier, "is the greatest burlesque artist, with the possible exception of Edward Terry, who ever trod the boards."

He is also, probably, the greatest exponent of the art of gagging.

When I suggested as much to Mr. Roberts he recalled an incident which he regarded as a professional compliment.

"I made one of my best successes," he said, "in a comic opera by H. B. Farnie in the 'eighties. 'There's your part,' said Farnie, handing me a couple of pages. I opened them, and to my astonishment the pages were blank."

"Mind you get my age correctly," said Mr. Roberts. "A clubman remarked to me the other evening, 'You must be seventy, Arthur.'

"I mustn't," I replied."

G. B. S. AT REHEARSAL.

Mr. Louis Calvert's interest was immediately aroused when I mentioned Shaw and Shakespeare.

"Mr. Shaw's numerous letters to me are the most diverting things imaginable," he said. "One of them contained pages on pages of persiflage in the following strain:—

'Dear Calvert, I see with disgust that the papers say that you are a magnificent actor and that 'Major Barbara' is a rotten play. Allow me to point out that 'Major Barbara' is a masterpiece and that you are the most incapable actor who ever disgraced the boards. I will insult you until your temper gets the better of your liver, and I will apologise to the audience for having engaged you.'

Mr. Calvert proceeded to heap coals of fire on his traducer.

"Mr. Shaw," he continued, "is one of the finest stage managers I know. His special gift is to repeat his lines for the actors' benefit, with subtleties of intonation undreamed of by the performer. His method of not interrupting a scene or act at rehearsal until it is finished, and then making his suggestions, is one which I have never been able to follow, although I believe it is best for the actor."

On the subject of the neglect of Shakespeare, Mr. Calvert became eloquent.

"Shakespeare is one of our greatest powers for good. Villainy always comes to grief in his plays, and his writings are inspired by motives of the highest morality. Shakespeare, therefore, should be made more of in our schools. The only way to raise the standard of the theatre is to get at the child. A Shakespeare play seen by a child remains in his memory until the end of his days. Children should be taught to love Shakespeare for his humanity. Then, when they grow up, they will not ask for bedroom plays."

"Print my opinions," concluded Mr. Calvert, "but don't talk about me. Write me down as an actor who puts himself personally immeasurably below his beloved art."

"BOBBY" HALE.

Everybody off the stage calls Mr. Robert Hale "Bobby." The name reveals the man, a hail-fellow-well-met wherever he goes.

What a reception he had on the first night of "Irene"! Mr. Hale has been an Empire Theatre favourite since "Everybody's Doing It" in 1912. When he came on in "Irene" his first line was equivalent to Joey's "Here we are again!" and the audience responded with a roar.

A property cigar about ten inches long, suspended from the mirror in Mr. Hale's dressing-room at the Empire, was a souvenir of the comedian's appearance as Lord Lonsdale at the Coliseum Command performance. That recalled the multiplicity of parts he played in "Everybody's Doing It."

"I believe I created a record in that revue by playing eleven characters in an hour and forty minutes. They were Lord Lonsdale, Mr. Hammerstein, 'Jimmy' Glover, Drake, Harry Pilcer, Charles Brookfield, the Censor, a huntsman, a street preacher, a grand opera singer, and myself."

A reference to the America Cup reminded Mr. Hale that he once flew the burgee of a yacht club, the subscription to which was "ten bob a year."

"My *May Queen* was a four-and-a-half tonner, cutter-rigged, like the *Shamrock*. One dark night she scraped Southend Pier, ran into a barge, and actually fouled the Nore lightship—a feat never attempted, I believe, by any other 'yachtsman.' My crew—a boy named Wallace—gorged a whole pot of jam while I lay prone on my tummy, dreadfully

ill, for the bowsprit was under water, and we were rolling horribly.

“The *May Queen* sank shortly afterwards, leaving me lamenting an offer of twenty pounds which I received for her—and I refused, because I wanted two pounds more. Believe me, I am ‘some’ yatchsman ! ”

A MASTER OF MAKE-UP.

There is no greater master of the art of making-up than Mr. Cyril Maude.

“For many years,” Mr. Maude told me at the Criterion, “I rarely appeared in anything but ‘character’ parts, usually of men much older than myself, and I took a keen delight in sinking my own individuality. Even as a boy, before I thought of the stage, I was fond of painting my features.

“When I was a Charterhouse boy a tutor tried to dissuade me from becoming an actor. In order to convince him that I had some aptitude for the stage, I hired an old woman’s wig from a hairdresser, obtained some feminine clothes, and walked in the rig-out in broad daylight to my tutor’s house. On the way I was encouraged to hear a Frenchwoman exclaim to her companion, ‘Mon Dieu ! Just look at her ! Aren’t these Englishwomen ugly ? ’ The tutor was satisfied, and I took to my calling.

“I am still learning and studying at the mirror. Every time I play Grumpy I occupy fully an hour in making up the old fellow’s face, and I have spent 1,268 hours at the task.

“The work is pleasant, because it has to be varied to conform with the differing sizes and lighting methods of various theatres. Those considerations apply particularly to the making up of the hands, the veins having to be carefully ‘blued’ and the knuckles chalked to obtain the required effect.”

“JUST PLAIN MARY BROUGH.”

The favourite comedienne, Miss Mary Brough, is the surviving member, on the stage, of a famous family of English comedians. Her father was the inimitable Lal Brough. Pointing to an umbrella in her dressing-room, at the Comedy, she informed me that the ebony and silver handle was once a walking stick presented to her father by Fred Leslie

when they were playing in the comic opera "Rip Van Winkle" at that theatre. On the handle is the inscription, "From Young Rip to Old Nick." Leslie was Rip and Brough was the Nick Vedder.

"I remember, as a tiny tot," said Miss Brough, "sitting in the royal box at the first performance ever given in this theatre, which was opened under the management of my father, in conjunction with Alexander Henderson and his wife, Lydia Thompson. The comic opera was 'La Mascotte,' with my father and Miss Thompson as principal members of the cast.

"Their management lasted for several years, and besides 'La Mascotte' and 'Rip Van Winkle' they gave other comic operas, all of them successes. My father was a great favourite with King Edward, and I remember quite distinctly when, in 'Rip Van Winkle,' the late King—then Prince of Wales—told my father that the pipe he was smoking was not a correct German pipe, and that next time he visited Germany he would bring him the real article, which he did.

"I am a real cockney, born in South Lambeth at a house occupied by our family for more than forty years. When I was a child, South Lambeth was in the country. Our garden was an immense affair, and my father was very proud of it, particularly of a large mulberry tree that stood in the centre of a lawn and bore luscious fruit each year. Now, alas, both house and garden are gone, and the site is occupied by an electrical works.

"Just as my father was known among his friends as Lal, I am known to my friends as Polly. Mr. Arthur Collins says that I am 'only Mary on the bills.'

"The other day I received a telegram from a cinema firm addressed Dolly Brough, so I suppose I am to be known in film-land as Dolly Brough; but, actually, I am and always shall be just plain Mary Brough."

ALWAYS MERRY AND BRIGHT.

Miggles, the shopwalker, in his room at the Gaiety, was toying with the gilded shinguards of the noblest Roman of them all, whom he was burlesquing delightfully in "The Shop Girl."

After a vain attempt to delude me into the belief that these armorial contraptions were the leg guards of a motor-bicycle,

Mr. Alfred Lester proceeded to lament his sad lot in having to play perpetually the most miserable parts imaginable, when his natural temperament is always "Merry and Bright."

Knowing what Mr. Lester is capable of in the portrayal of comic misery, I pretended to condole with him. Eventually I condoled with him sincerely.

"An artist gains a reputation in a particular line of character," he said, "and he is doomed to that line for the rest of his life. Versatility is not encouraged in the English theatre as it is in America and France.

"Sir Alfred Butt saw me at a suburban theatre, the picture of abject misery. He booked me for the Palace—more misery. Then Edwardes put me into a Gaiety piece—misery again. After that Courtneidge worked me up to a climax of misery in 'The Arcadians.'

"I was wallowing and drowning in misery when the part of Miggles saved the remainder of my reason. For the first time in the West End I am permitted to give the public a glimpse of my sparkling self. Have you seen my Hamlet in 'The Shop Girl?' Confess, now! Isn't it Merry and Bright?

"Seriously, I've had enough. I want to be human and natural. My ambition now is to play a sympathetic character part in a good play on the regular boards.

"Musical comedy actresses are allowed to get out of the rut—there are dozens of familiar instances—but a musical comedy actor, never.

"In my younger days I played every type of part from Richelieu to the Dame in pantomime. I was Little Willie in 'East Lynne,' Seth Preene in 'The Lights o' London,' Charles Middlewick in 'Our Boys,' Conn in 'The Shaughraun,' and Shaun the Poet in 'Arrah-Na-Pogue.' Now I walk on like an undertaker's guy, with my feet turned in. It isn't right."

It isn't. Mr. Lester must have his heart's desire. When he does appear in a straight part in the "legit.," believe me, he will play it with all his might.

TRADE UNIONIST PEER.

Mr. Arthur Wellesley is Earl Cowley off the stage. Wellesley is the earl's real name, as it was of the Iron Duke, to

whose family the actor belongs. Mr. Wellesley is that rare bird, a trade unionist peer.

"I joined the Actors' Association," he told me, "when it was agitating to become a trade union, and a few weeks ago I was asked to put up for the council of the association. Trade unionism, in my belief, is necessary to every business and profession. In the theatrical profession it is beneficial to managers as well as employees. The A.A. listens sympathetically to managerial complaints. It is not an organisation to fight the managers."

The young actor (he is in his thirtieth year) has been through the mill of the stage. He spoke sympathetically, therefore, of the fine work which is being accomplished by the actors' trade union in improving the lot of the humbler members of his calling.

"The limitation of rehearsals to thirty-six hours a week, as a result of the A.A. agitation, was a most necessary reform. As a former member of the chorus, absolutely dependent on it for a living, I knew what it meant to rehearse a part for a couple of months without payment.

"We chorus men sometimes rehearsed a piece longer than we actually played in it. I have attended rehearsals from midnight till 7.30 a.m., and the next day from 11.45 a.m. till 7 p.m. Nobody was paid, and when the curtain rose on the evening of the second day we were positively expected to sing !

"My experience has been mostly in musical comedy and revue, which I regard as the hardest work of the stage. So much is left to the actor's own initiative in those forms of entertainment. In comedy, which I prefer, you have excellent lines to speak, and you cannot help making good if you speak them intelligently."

HICKY-DULA BUNGALOW.

The great little droll, Billy Merson, pointed to the proudest possession in his room at the Palace Theatre. It was a photograph of Sir J. Martin-Harvey autographed to the comedian, a souvenir of Tank Week, when Sir John and Billy orated in Trafalgar-square. "That was a far, far better thing," said Billy, "than I have ever done."

Next to that achievement Mr. Merson was proudest, perhaps, of his occupation off the boards.

"I'm building with my own fair hands a bungalow at Ditton. All my people were builders, so I suppose it is in the blood. There will be four bedrooms, two reception-rooms, and kitchen in the bungalow. The furniture, too—dressing-tables, wardrobes, and so on—will all be made by Merson. The name of my desirable river residence will be the Hicky-Dula."

Mr. Merson popped a lurid red wig on his raven black hair, jumped into the baggy trousers of his burlesque dress suit, and fled. A moment later a burst of gargantuan laughter reverberated along the passages. Billy Merson was striking an attitude on the stage.

PEG OF ALL OUR HEARTS.

"Welcome, a thousand welcomes, to 'Peg o' My Heart.' Peg has assuredly come to stay."

That is what I printed the morning after Miss Laurette Taylor's first appearance in England in 1914. Miss Taylor subsequently played Peg in London for the thousandth time.

"But I don't want to go on playing Peg indefinitely," Miss Taylor told me at the Garrick. "It has been Peg this and Peg that for years. The monotony of it was deadly.

"I would have been enormously rich if I had stuck to Peg, but I wanted to be an actress, an artist, not an automaton. When I told that to David Warfield he said: 'Oh, my dear, it's better to be loved than admired.' He meant, I think, that versatility was a quality many admired, but few cared to witness. I remembered, however, that the big people of the stage—the Duses, Bernhardts, and Ellen Terrys—played anything and everything. So I launched out in other directions. I tried to make my personality malleable.

"I played the part of an elderly mother to a boy of nineteen; and a New York paper said next day: 'Peg was very good last night.' Then I tried the character of a Cockney girl. Still they headlined me as Peg. After that I became a shop girl in 'Happiness'—a girl of fifteen, then eighteen, then twenty. This time the newspapers dropped the Peg and referred to me as Miss Taylor. It is always Miss Taylor now, and I am satisfied.

"That is how I succeeded in getting out of my groove.

Do not think me ungrateful, though. Peg brought me a great many evidences of your playgoers' esteem.

"The presents I received were delightfully human. One was a pound of tea, sent to my hotel because the sender thought that I could not be too well catered for. A dear old lady sent me a doyley embroidered with butterflies. 'Something nice for you to look at,' she said. Another admirer of Peg forwarded half-a-dozen handkerchiefs, with pictures of Peg's dog Michael done in indelible ink in the corners."

MRS. JAMES BERNARD FAGAN.

"A handsome Oberon," was the general verdict on Miss Mary Grey's King of the Fairies in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at the Court Theatre. The critics agreed, too, that not only was Shakespeare's verse well spoken by the actress, but his lyrics were charmingly sung.

A smooth transition from a singing to a speaking voice is by no means easy of accomplishment. Miss Mary Grey (Mrs. James Bernard Fagan) had undergone a period of Shakespearean training which enabled her to overcome the difficulty without apparent effort.

"Few people are aware," she told me, "that I was a member of Sir Frank Benson's company before I appeared in light opera at Daly's, and I sang a good deal in Sir Frank's productions. That early experience in elocution and vocalism has proved invaluable to me.

"Music and reading are my hobbies. My husband is glad to have my assistance in reading the manuscript of plays which, like all theatrical managers, he receives by every post. We discuss them together, and are mutually interested in their fate.

"My tastes are simple. A drive in a good motor-car is my ideal of a perfect day. It may sound ordinary, but ardent motorists know that it means a great deal.

"I would not be a true woman, of course, if I did not love to talk about clothes.

"I think that the average woman should not exercise her mind so much about following the fleeting fashions as she should about discovering the style which suits her, and dressing accordingly. A man should do the same; always excepting—if I may venture to suggest—that very important article of his attire, his hat!"

THE BROKEN MIRROR.

An eighteenth-century girl in a gorgeous green-and-gold pannier dress, with a becoming patch on her cheek, curtsied gracefully in a dressing-room at the Princes Theatre. The vision of loveliness and maidenly charm was Lady Mary Carlisle (Miss Maggie Teyte), the heroine of "Monsieur Beaucaire." You caught her at a moment when even a successful prima donna found occasion to blush with pleasure.

The room had just been invaded by four renowned prime donne and a famous beauty—Mme. Clara Butt, Mme. Perceval Allen, Miss Carmen Hill, Mme. Zelie de Lussan, and Miss Constance Collier. The small apartment, with its bright cretonne upholstery, had suddenly become a golden treasury of song.

After the congratulations on the young prima donna's success, Miss Teyte remarked: "You see, there is plenty of camaraderie in our profession. Do not believe the stories you hear of insensate jealousy among us. There is no warmer admirer of an artist's work than another artist."

That notion dispelled, you were rather relieved to find that theatrical superstition continues to flourish even in the upper circles of prima donnadom. Miss Teyte had recently lost her one and only dressing-room curio. "I smashed my little mirror on the first night of 'Beaucaire,'" she said. "It had been my mascot for nearly ten years, and had brought me great luck."

"Being a woman, I could not resist the temptation to inform the author, Mr. Frederick Lonsdale, of the disaster. He was appropriately horrified. How 'Beaucaire' succeeded after that I cannot imagine. There must be something uncannily irresistible about a piece which has defied even the omen of a broken mirror."

LITTLE JACK HARVEY.

"What! little Jack Harvey fill the Lyceum!" exclaimed Miss Ellen Terry.

That was twenty-three years ago. Sir John Martin-Harvey has recently been playing to capacity audiences at the Lyceum with the same play, "The Only Way," which inspired Miss Terry's good-humoured exclamation of incredulity.

So the laugh is with Sir John. He told me in his dressing-room, however, that "The Only Way" was no laughing matter at first, in spite of its artistically successful *première* at the Lyceum.

Difficulties and obstacles, financial and otherwise, faced him at every turn of the original production. The piece did not pay its way for a considerable time. Sir John clung to it tenaciously after a transference to the Prince of Wales Theatre and during a disappointing first tour of the provinces. "Later, at the Prince of Wales," said the actor tersely, "I could not pay the rent, and I had to get out."

"Why not take 'The Only Way' to the provinces again?" a friend suggested. "The piece made a deep impression on the first tour, although the profit was small. The interest in a second visit would be double."

"The second tour was a revelation," said Sir John. "Everywhere 'The Only Way' was a triumph. The forlorn hope saved us from disaster and established me in management.

"The vitality of the play increased with the years. People visited it over and over again. During its first London season Lord Dudley saw it one hundred times. Lord Roberts was another frequent visitor. The general public were so fascinated by the piece that for a long time they refused to see me in anything else."

Lady Martin-Harvey told a sad little story of the influence exercised by her part, Mimi, on people in distress.

"A little girl of seven or eight took a real fancy to me because she thought I reminded her of her dead mother. Her father wrote stating the child was consumptive. Her greatest joy in life, he said, was to see 'The Only Way.' He asked me to write to her, and we exchanged many letters. One day her letters ceased. The child was dead, and her last words were, 'Tell Mimi.' "

AMERICA'S BEST MACBETH.

Macbeth at close quarters in the glare of Mr. James K. Hackett's dressing-room made an imposing sight. The actor is much above the average height, and of proportionately fine physique. His aspect was truly formidable.

No modern actor has "looked the part" more completely. The facial make-up, seen in detail, was a work of art.

Although the blood-red hair and beard and fierce moustache implied the warrior, the actor had considered the highly developed intellect of Macbeth. This ruddy Anak, with his noble forehead and splendidly intelligent eyes, was obviously capable of the thought denoted in his utterances.

Mr. Hackett confirmed my view of his Macbeth—that he was a hero rushed into crime.

“Macbeth was not a coward,” he said. “He was the idol of his army, the Marshal Foch of his time. He had no fear for himself, only for his moral disintegration. When ruin encompassed him he clutched, like a drowning man, at straws. Superstition was his bane. Those juggling fiends, he tells us, had ‘cow’d his better part of man.’

“That is the basis of my reading of Macbeth. Its reception by the London audiences and critics has charmed me more than I can say. I am a happy and a grateful man. Some months ago, you will remember, I told you that I would not like to shuffle off this mortal coil without appearing in London. Well, I have now appeared in London, and the encouragement showered upon me fills me with embarrassment. It has given me a sense of responsibility, which I am anxious to live up to.

“The cheers and applause on my opening night are still ringing in my ears. I would like to deserve that tribute again in other Shakespearean characters. Theatrical conditions at the moment are not conducive to high endeavour, but I hope they will permit me to appear in London as Falstaff in the ‘Merry Wives.’”

MADE BY A HALFPENNY.

When the vast Lyceum audience roars with laughter, you have to sit up and listen. It laughed uproariously at the facial and vocal comicalities of George Bass, the Lancashire comedian, as Idle Jack in “Dick Whittington.”

The merriment was almost uncontrollable when Mr. Bass bobbed up in the orchestra well and “conducted” the orchestra. It became positively apoplectic when he sang “Ca-beans, Ca-bages, and Ca-rots.” There were many who collapsed, helpless, with aching sides when he declared that he knew for a fact where flies go in the winter-time—in the Christmas pudding, for example, as “currants in the dough.”

In his dressing-room, Mr. Bass was a slick and slender

young man on the right side of thirty, sharp-featured, with a twinkle in the eye. "Before I went on the stage," he told me. "I won prizes on the running track. No more running for me! I'm booked for the Stoll tour at £150 a week, and can't spare the time."

The comedian's appearance made it difficult to keep one's face straight. His complexion was as pale as a ghost's. He wore a brilliant red wig, small red moustache, a tiny red tie in an enormous collar, abbreviated coat and trousers, glaring red socks, and a colossal pair of shoes knobby at the toes.

He chuckled over the fact that "Ca-beans, Ca-bages and Ca-rots," one of the hits of the pantomime season, was first sung by him and is his own property. So is, "I know where the flies go in the winter-time."

Then there is the celebrated George Bass clarinet. All through the pantomime he is going to play that clarinet, but the portentous preparations never come to anything.

He could play it all right if he liked. "I was dared to play it in the street to a theatre queue at New Brighton," he said. "When I had done the deed a little girl came up and gave me a halfpenny. 'Please do take it,' she said. I did; and it made me a professional player.

"You can't beat the Lyceum audiences for right-down jollity. At one performance a dear old cockney woman rushed up to the orchestra rail and called out at the top of her voice, 'Good old Ginger!'

"You've got to do your best for 'em when they like you as much as that!"

WEE GEORGIE.

One of the funniest performances of a recent pantomime season was Wee Georgie Wood's Wishee Washee in "Aladdin" at Kennington. Wee Georgie had the face and physique of a small boy of fifteen. He was well-formed and good-looking, with a peculiarly winning smile. He was a capital singer and a first-rate low comedian.

The children loved Wee Georgie. They screamed with laughter over his antics as Carpentier, his love-making scene with Miss Jennie Benson, and his protests at the wash-tub when Widow Twankey washes his neck. The culminating scream was reached when the diminutive "Carpentier"

placed a ladder against "Beckett's" chest and mounted it to administer the knock-out.

The ladies, too, were in love with Wee Georgie. It was the winning smile that captured them, especially when he coaxed them into singing the chorus of that delectable ditty, "Where do flies go in the winter-time?"

A fair admirer in the stalls remarked within my hearing that Wee Georgie was a married man. The fact was well known, she said.

My incredulity was justified. "I'm not married, and I don't intend to be," said Georgie. So that's that!

Georgie protested that all the feminine society he needed was his mother. "Mother is my mascot," he said, "and she is always with me."

Wee Georgie added that he wrote most of his own music-hall sketches. His hobbies were photography and football. During his sixteen years on the stage, he toured America once and South Africa twice. Age, twenty-four.

A GOOD PLUCKED 'UN.

Mr. Huntley Wright, looking very learned in spectacles, was preparing to go on at the Gaiety. He had made his musical comedy part a skilful character study, and those who remember him in "The Little Father in the Wilderness" are well aware of his abilities as a legitimate actor. "As my dear old father used to say," said Mr. Wright, "the man who cannot go on and make an audience cry as well as laugh is not a good comedian."

Mr. Wright was a good plucked 'un in the war, although this is his fiftieth year. He has innumerable friends who are proud of his soldiering record. The story of how he joined up is worth telling.

"I didn't agree with the pre-war theory," he said, "that a man could not be a soldier because he wore glasses or was not six feet high. I had played all games, including both codes of football; I had shot, and kept wicket, and consequently I did not see any reason, when the Government called for volunteers, why I should not give a hand.

"I heard that a regiment of Yeomanry (1st County of London) was starting a second regiment, and I sent my name to the second in command. He said he would like to have me in the regiment, but the age restrictions seemed to be in the

way. ‘How old do you ‘ake ‘em in the ranks?’ I asked. ‘Oh, up to thirty-eight.’ ‘Strange, just my age!’ said I.

“I was told to go before the M.O. for sight-testing, and went to a recruiting office.

“The doctor was at lunch. I was shown into a room, saw the sight-testing card, and learned it. When he came back and took my glasses off, I recited the card from memory and got my papers. They were accepted by my regiment, I was duly enrolled, and took the oath for ‘three years or the duration.’”

FROM KEAN TO FLORENCE SMITHSON.

The most historic dressing-room in London was occupied by Miss Florence Smithson in a pantomime at Drury Lane. It was the “star’s” room, a few paces from the wings. Here, where the principal girl made up her dainty features for the pantomime, Edmund Kean probably donned his gabardine as Shylock on the night of his wonderful débüt 108 years ago. Macready dressed here, too, and, in more recent times, Henry Irving, Forbes-Robertson, Henry Neville, Dan Leno, Mrs. John Wood, Fanny Brough, and H. B. Irving.

An old-fashioned fireplace and an extraordinarily high ceiling were the only indications of age. All else was ultra-modern, from the bright pink upholstery to a large model aeroplane dangling over the tidy dressing-table. Indeed, the keynote of the place was youth. The principal girl was youth personified, and the name of the character she played was Joy. Her small daughter, of whom there were two portraits on the mantelpiece, also, curiously enough, bore the uncommon Christian name of Joy. Moreover, the spirit of happy childhood pervaded the ancient place in the form of numerous coloured pictures of laughing baby girls. What company, when lights were low, for the ghosts of the great departed!

AINLEY AT THE ST. JAMES’S.

The beautiful dressing-room occupied by Mr. Henry Ainley at the St. James’ Theatre was decorated on a note of chaste severity. It was a large, brightly-lighted apartment with a much smaller making-up room tucked away in a corner. The eye was soothed by soft colours and gratified by the absence of restless effects.

A few choice pictures and historic playbills provided the nucleus of a collection for which Mr. Ainley spends his odd moments in the curio shops. One St. James' playbill was dated 1836, a year after the theatre opened. The entertainment (four plays) began at 6.30 and ended at midnight, and the prices were only three shillings for boxes and three shillings for ground-floor seats. The bill indicated where free admission could be obtained, so the deadhead flourished then, as now.

Over the fireplace, in the place of honour, hung a virile pencil sketch by the "Punch" artist, Dowd, of the actor's father. Near by was a photograph of Riviere's Academy portrait of Sir Frank Benson in 'varsity running shorts. "I played three years with Benson," said Mr. Ainley, "and acted in all his Shakespearean productions." Other portraits were Millais' Henry Irving and Pettie's Charles Wyndham. There was also a Wattsian drawing by Ricketts, signed by Thomas Hardy, illustrating Hardy's "The Dynasts," in which Mr. Ainley made one of his greatest successes.

TYPICAL OF THE STRUGGLE.

An actress whose name was unfamiliar to London playgoers, Miss Ethel Griffies, proved to be a "find" in "Othello" at the Scala. Miss Griffies is a handsome young woman, tall and dark, and she is obviously well equipped for the leading roles in Shakespeare. Her Emilia was unreservedly praised by all the critics.

Miss Griffies' story is typical of the struggle which the average provincial actress experiences before making good in London.

"My theatrical career began at the age of three," she told me. "When I was four the leading provincial journals were good enough to console me with references to 'flashes of genius in a child'; but when I grew into a tall, gawky girl I seemed to be always at the wrong age for any part I desired.

"Months and years of obscure work on tour in musical comedy and repertory led to a devouring ambition to 'arrive' in London. I found London managers inaccessible to a mere provincial, so I went back to the country. Manchester liked me in Shakespeare and old English comedy, and as Paula Tanqueray, so I was encouraged to try London again.

"This time I obtained an engagement with Sir J. Forbes-

Robertson as stage-manager at the Playhouse and the Queen's. Miss Fellowes-Robinson and I managed and stage-managed the entire staff without any assistance but a prompter. Miss Ellen Terry also engaged me to manage for her and to play Mistress Ford.

"Then I entertained a good deal in the military camps. Now I have the most comfortable engagement of my life at the Scala, and I am glad to think that whatever success I may have achieved has come to me under such a charming, considerate, and unselfish management as that of Mr. and Mrs. Nettlefold."

SPECIALIST IN "FLIPS."

Imagine a youthful President Wilson, smooth-featured and wearing black horn spectacles, and you will gain an ocular impression of the American comedian, Mr. Walter Catlett.

The clever newcomer to the London stage is only in his thirty-second year, but he has been twenty-two years an actor. "I started in a troupe of juveniles when I was eight," he said. "When I grew out of boy parts—newsboys, jockeys, and so on—I joined a minstrel show as a song-and-dance artist. Then I went into a pay-box to learn the business side of the profession.

"In the American stock companies I played every type of character, classic and modern.

"In one year, with Oliver Morosco's repertory company at Los Angeles, I acted in twenty-eight new plays. The experience also included many Shakespeare and Gilbert and Sullivan productions, my characters comprising the First Gravedigger, Gobbo, the Gaoler in 'Macbeth,' Koko in 'The Mikado,' Bunthorne in 'Patience,' and the Admiral and Dick Deadeye in 'Pinafore.'

"In New York during the past seven years I have specialised in flip parts. 'Flip' is short for flippant—we abbreviate most everything over there. A flip character is a slangy, crude person, a small town wise guy. My biggest hit of the sort was in 'So Long, Letty,' which ran a year.

"Your good Will Shakespeare epitomises all that I hold most dear in the practice of my art. Next, I most admire your unrivalled Gilbert and Sullivan—but I would be afraid to play their characters here, where you speak the King's English. Above all, I love your Charles Dickens. It is my

ambition to play Dickens parts—for my own amusement, not to inflict them on the public; but Dickens is almost unactable—so I must give up the idea forlornly. The best protean actor I have ever seen, Bransby Williams, has invited me to inspect his Dickens collection, so I am looking forward to a congenial day."

Mr. Catlett's make-up is almost negligible, and he completed it in a few minutes. "A comic make-up may get a scream on entrance," he said, "but the comedian has to live up to it. I prefer to depend more on personality and the author's lines.

"My spectacles were a trade mark with me in America. There are no glasses in the rims, and I have often raised a laugh by passing a handkerchief through them at the end of a show."

"TO MY BEST IAGO."

The actor of a season—the Jewish tragedian, Maurice Moscovitch, whose Shylock was the talk of the town—is a regular son of Anak. He stood 6ft. 1in. in his little dressing-room—a towering figure topped by a fine head of bushy iron-grey hair and a mobile, expressive countenance—an ideal "actor's face." He spoke excellent English in softly modulated tones, and he talked lovingly, caressingly of his art.

The actor's height was a surprise, for it is not apparent in his Shylock. "My make-up takes perspective into consideration," he said, "and I also adapt my deportment to that end. My Shylock is dark, because I believe the Jews of his period were a dark race entirely. A red-wigged Shylock strikes me as a cheap conception. The man was an aristocrat, and I dress him as such, and endeavour to comport myself accordingly.

"I am delighted that my Shylock is described as 'the Jew that Shakespeare drew.' It was my determination, in studying the part, to realise the author's intention at all costs. I rejected racial susceptibilities. After all, the responsibility is Shakespeare's, not ours. What right has any man to tamper with Shakespeare's conception—to read his own pet theories for the sake of personal effect into a character which may have been the fruit of a life-time's thought ?

"Although I have played Shylock in Yiddish all over the world, as well as in England, and in Russian in Russia, I do not specialise in Jewish roles, as many people seem to think.

My parts have included all varieties of modern characters, besides many other Shakespearean roles.

"My favourite and most successful part is Iago. There is more art and more opportunity for display in Iago than in Othello. I would also like to play Othello and King Lear in London."

The dressing-room was bereft of absolutely everything extraneous to the business of making-up. Mr. Moscovitch had only one souvenir for inspection. It was a watch given to him in New York eight years ago by the famous German tragedian, Maurice Morison, and it bore the inscription, "To My Best Iago."

MADELEINE WAS SHY.

The sweet little girl who delighted the audience at the *première* of "Daddies" at the Haymarket, Madeleine Robinson, is a niece of the black-and-white artist, Mr. Heath Robinson. Her father, Mr. T. H. Robinson, is also a gifted artist. That information, supplied by Madeleine's stage teacher, Miss Italia Conti, did not excite the child so much as the fact that her mother was about to witness her performance for the first time.

The imminence of that event caused Madeleine to rouge her lips excessively. I marvelled that the fair young face (Madeleine is eleven, although she plays a child of five) should require any make-up at all. Her complexion had the bloom of perfect health, her bright eyes danced, and her mop of curly, bobbed brown hair, framing a pretty oval face, completed a picture of entrancing childhood.

Madeleine, I am pleased to say, was shy. She retired to a corner by the window, gazed over the housetops, and probably thought unutterable things about interviewers.

Which was just as it should be. She admitted, however, that nervousness did not trouble her on the first night. "It was the kitten's first appearance, too," she said, "and I was thinking about the kitten."

I reminded her of her funniest line, spoken at the top of "Daddy" Tully's head, "Some of your hairs have flewed away!"—and Madeleine laughed. That broke the ice for a cross-examination on the meaning of the new song which she sings to her French soldier doll, "*Etait un petit potache*"—a tale of a lout who went to the war and came back ever so

brave. Oh, yes, she knew the meaning of *potache*—"a rude sort of person ; horrible or something."

Further inquiry elicited, by slow degrees, the information that Madeleine went to bed at 11.30, slept like a top, had a bread-and-milk breakfast at nine, then morning school, then play in the garden, then two hours' sleep except on matinée days, when she slept on a bed in the theatre, then more lessons. Life under those conditions was indeed worth living, always provided Miss Conti did not give vent to the worst of all professional threats, " You don't play to-night ! "

SOUL OF A STEP-DANCER.

Mr. Jack Hulbert's wonderful step-dancing was a hit of a season. The young comedian's success must have gratified a great many people, judging by the array of well-wishing telegrams in his dressing-room. Pinned together, they covered nearly a whole side of the room, and the majority of them were couched in terms of affection.

A horseshoe over the telegrams, tied with Caius colours—pale-blue and black—was a souvenir of college days at Cambridge. So were the photographs of college eights, with Hulbert among the crews. The grotesque black cats and funny-eyed dolls and toy dogs were mementos of Cambridge theatricals—gifts from admiring undergrads.

Mr. Hulbert took the house by storm with a recitation-dance illustrating the actions of a golfer set to the rhythmic steps of an American buck dance.

"A straight step-dance," he said, "no matter how clever it may be, does not get home like a dance with a motive and a purpose. It is not so much the visual effect as the underlying idea that enthuses the onlooker. That is the principle I work on in my dance creations.

"Americans are great step-dancers, but their main intention appears to be to introduce as many beats of the foot as possible. In that respect they are difficult to rival, and the variety of their steps—what with nerve beats, tremors, and winging and double-winging actions—is extraordinary.

"If, however, you wish to obtain an artistic as well as a merely acrobatic effect, I contend that there must be creative intention behind the muscular exertion. In a word, the foot should speak for the brain.

"I love step-dancing, and the only thing I have against

it is that it injuriously affects the voice. Why, I do not know. My theory is that one inhales a good deal of dust, so I endeavour to counteract the trouble by breathing exercises and elocution and by gargling a germ-killer after each performance."

VIOLET VANBRUGH'S ADVICE.

Sunlight was streaming into Miss Violet Vanbrugh's room at the Court Theatre. A temporary screen round the dressing-table enabled the actress to make-up by electric light. "I love the sunshine," she said, "but if I were to paint my face on the other side of the screen, it really would appear to be 'Trimmed in Scarlet' befor the footlights." The room is usually Miss Mary Grey's, so almost the only ornament pertaining to Miss Vanbrugh was a portrait of her gifted sister Irene. Mascots were conspicuous by their absence.

Miss Vanbrugh's voice was soft and musical, and her manner gently feminine, in striking contrast to the tone and demeanour of the flamboyant women she has played in recent years. "Since my Claire Forster in 'A Woman in the Case,'" she said, "I have had numerous plays written for me round that type of part, and as some of them are good ones, it has been to my advantage to continue the line of character.

"But one's first love is always Shakespeare. I consider myself fortunate in the opportunities I have had to play in Shakespeare. One comes back to modern comedy from Shakespeare with a tremendous amount learned. Acquaintance with his art gives to the performer an added ease and suppleness which are invaluable."

As the actress spoke, a whole gallery of Shakespearean heroines, played with the greatest distinction by Violet Vanbrugh, flashed across the mind—her Queen Katherine in "Henry VIII." at His Majesty's, her Beatrice in "Much Ado," her Lady Macbeth, Rosalind, and Portia.

"When I was studying Shakespeare," continued Miss Vanbrugh, "I profited greatly by a suggestion made to me by Mr. Henry Arthur Jones. Perhaps you will mention it, as a hint to young actresses? I read Milton's majestic poetry aloud for half an hour every day. Shakespeare's verse, by comparison, seemed almost colloquial.

“Another useful experience, as long as you do not have too much of it, is to appear in a full-length play twice nightly on the halls, as I did in ‘Trimmed in Scarlet.’ The need to take your lines and business at a greater pace reveals the fact that much of the calculated slowness in the legitimate theatre is quite unnecessary.

“One learns, indeed, from everything; even from one-night stands. I arrived recently with my company in a small town in the north. We must have looked rather forlorn. ‘Be that them?’ said a girl in the street, in a disappointed tone. ‘I’ll keep my money for the pictures!’ ”

BERRY OF THE ADELPHI.

Every inch of the walls in the star’s room at the Adelphi is covered with photographs of stage celebrities, all uniformly framed, and many of them jovially autographed to popular “Bill Berry.” Sir George Alexander’s is signed “With sixteen good wishes”—a souvenir of his victory over Mr. Berry in the golf competition for the Theatre Shield in 1912, when the comedian’s handicap was sixteen.

“My dear old chief,” says Mr. Berry, pointing to a large picture of the late Mr. George Edwardes, inscribed “The Napoleon of Musical Comedy,” Mr. Huntley Wright, his associate at Daly’s during the Edwardes’ régime, signs his photograph, “From his old comrade.” Other noted Edwardesians on the walls are Miss Lily Elsie and Mr. G. P. Huntley.

A somewhat faded photograph shows a concert hall at Broadstairs, above a group of the Broadstairs Bohemians, the pierrot troupe in which Mr. Berry was discovered in 1905 during a casual seaside trip by Mr. Edwardes and Mr. Caryll. Mrs. Berry (Miss Kitty Henson) is among the Bohemians. The comedian speaks with pardonable pride of Miss Henson’s stage abilities.

“I have been twenty years in only two theatres, Daly’s and the Adelphi,” says Mr. Berry. “Something of a record for a comedian I believe.”

“FEMALE IMPERSONATION.”

A trio of Bethune Beauties were helping each other to dress for the opening scene at the Savoy. Phil (Mr. Reg. Stone) had Titian hair. Gwen (Mr. Ellis Brooke) wore flaxen

tresses. Mabel (Mr. Jack Richards) was a bonny, bright-eyed brunette.

"Do he waistband up first, Rich," said Phil. "Do the bodice and the dress together, Rich," said Gwen.

"Where's that blank safety pin?" Mabel exclaimed.

"Don't be unkind," expostulated Phil. "The safety pin's a great invention. Half our ambitions wouldn't be realised without it!"

"We use hundreds and thousands of safety pins," Phil added. "And the dresses we wear out! Oh, my——! Lorry-loads of 'em! They have seen life, believe me!"

Phil trilled as he dressed.

"How do you like my sweet soprano? I'm taking singing lessons. My voice is really a baritone, but I'm gradually discarding it.

"You wouldn't believe what a relief it is to get back into trousers after the show. Of course, we're used to it now, but when we first wore high heels we suffered agonies. We wanted to walk on our toes. Unsteady feeling, wasn't it, Ellis?"

"That reminds me" continued Mr. Stone. "After our last concert at the front, General Sir Henry Horne sent a bouquet to each of us 'girls.' Somebody else sent me a bottle of gin. I passed it on to the other boys of the party—and watched it work. Laugh? I should—Rich, where's that blanketty bangle?"

"I took on this girl stunt," said Mr. Stone, "after Lord Elgin, Director of Labour for the First Army, had picked me out of an impromptu show at the front. I was a private in a cycling battalion. Before the war I had played in revues. Now I intend to carry on in the female impersonation business."

"How do you like my Columbine costume?" asked Mr. Brooke. I thought it looked a dream—as indeed it did. "Gwen" chuckled. "Made it myself. At Valenciennes. In my billet. Out of a muslin curtain! What'll you have? Mabel, where's that bottle of Bass?"

LADY FORBES-ROBERTSON IN A HURRY.

Miss Gertrude Elliott (Lady Forbes-Robertson) had a dressing-room specially built on the St. James's stage six yards from the wings, for the production of "Eyes of Youth."

It was a shack-like hut with double curtains instead of a door to facilitate ready entrance and exit, for the contrivance was necessitated by a lightning change of dress. The actress flashed by me in the character of a young girl, a lovely fleeting vision in pink chiffon. She disappeared through the curtains with the action of a diver taking a header. Exactly forty-two seconds later, Miss Elliott dashed back to the stage—heaving a sigh as she ran—this time as an elderly school marm. In less than a minute the girl's raven hair had become tinged with grey, and every item of her apparel, from wig to shoes, had been changed by two quick-fingered dressers.

Meanwhile an almost equally marvellous transformation had taken place on the stage. An exterior scene, the verandah of a country house, vanished in a twinkling upwards and sideways—the sides along grooved steel rails—and while it was disappearing, a schoolroom slid down stage into its place, also along steel rails, with a dozen scholars seated at their desks. All this happened almost before the audience could blink; certainly before it could detach its mind from the preceding scenes and prepare its attention for the next.

AN OLD ACTOR-RR-RRR.

“Bourchier of Eton and Oxford” was trying on a wonderful rear protuberance at the Apollo Theatre. The contrivance, made of wool and sheep-skin, was anathematised as well-nigh insupportable in the heat wave. Trousers cut well above the ankles encased it tightly. “I feel like a cork escaping from a beer bottle,” said the actor, quoting one of his lines in “Tilly of Bloomsbury.”

The character is an old-school actor-rr-rrr—more super than actor, for he is supposed to have played the hind legs of an elephant at the Brit. “I studied him from life,” said Mr. Bourchier. “Did you ever hear of dear old C——? Walk, gait, mannerisms—all are his.”

Mr. Bourchier's stage creations have often been little masterpieces of portraiture. A sketch on the walls of Henry VIII. presented by Mr. Percy Macquoid, bore witness to the fact. One recalled, too, his eccentric nobleman in “Wheels Within Wheels.” The original entered the actor's room one day to compliment him on the performance. “Funny chap, that,” he said. “Who on earth is he meant to be?”

Old Bill sketches and models, a photograph of Mrs.

Bourchier, half-a-dozen cardboard black cats—these were the dressing-table ornaments. One Old Bill doll was a gift from Mlle. Delysia. A wonderful Old Bill sketch in colour was a Bairnsfather original, appropriately autographed.

“ONE MAN IN HIS TIME. . . .”

Mr. Fred Kitchen has been thoroughly through the mill.

“ My people were in two minds,” he told me at the Hippodrome, “ whether they should prepare me for the Church or the stage. They did not take long to decide. At the tender age of six weeks I played my first ‘ part ’ in a play.

“ The piece was an adaptation from the French called ‘ The Dumb Man of Manchester.’ I was carried on in the arms of my father, R. H. Kitchen, who was a famous actor in his day. He died at the age of eighty, having appeared on the stage for fifty-seven years.

“ My own experience to date covers a period of forty-seven years, beginning with the ‘ baby in arms ’ part. So now you know my age. When I was three years old I played all the principal children’s parts in a series of dramas at Portsmouth, at a salary of eighteen shillings a week.

“ At the age of seven I appeared, a hardened old actor, at the Old Imperial Theatre, next to the Aquarium, under my father and Lal Brough. (Incidentally, perhaps your readers do not know that the Imperial has now been taken bodily to Canning Town, where it is still known as the Imperial Theatre.) My father, by the way, danced before Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace in 1839. It was his proudest memory.

“ As for me, I can honestly vouch for the fact that a man in his time plays many parts. I have played drama, melodrama, Shakespearean parts, low comedy, high comedy, juvenile leads, and in circuses and revues. I have been almost everything on the stage but a leading lady. I have appeared not only in all the towns of the United Kingdom, but also in France, Belgium, the German Empire that was, and other parts of the Continent.”

INVENTED THE GAZEEKA.

The man who invented the Gazeeka—a mythical animal (or was it a bird ?) which will never be photographed at the Zoo—produced a new sketch at the Coliseum. One of his

funniest "lines" described a stage aspirant in the piece as "walking like a penguin leaving its egg." How typically Gravesian! Behind the scenes Mr. Graves described his special brand of humour as "domestic, with a bite."

"Talking of bites," he said, "I'm just off to dine with Carpentier at the Ritz. One advantage of playing on the halls is that you can see a fight without upsetting a whole evening's performance. You forfeit your salary, of course, but money isn't everything in life.

"I was playing in 'Maggie' when Carpentier gave Beckett his quietus. A strange thing happened. That night, just as I went on, I had an attack of fog in the thorax. The affliction grew worse as the hour of the boxing match approached.

"The arrival of the fateful moment synchronised exactly with the entire loss of my speaking voice. Strange, was it not? While the manager was apologising for my deputy's appearance the stage hands were asking me, as I passed out, to let them know the result of the fight. It was the longest stretch of the arm of coincidence I have ever known."

L'EXQUISE MARIE LOHR.

Miss Marie Löhr's dressing-room at the Globe was a dream in chintz and rose du Barri. A large oblong ante room led into a smaller and brightly lighted make-up room, where the actress was applying to her features a touch of rouge from a silver rouge box which Bernhardt used for *L'Aiglon*. The *Légion d'Honneur* which Miss Löhr wore in *L'Aiglon*'s death scene was suspended on the mirror—a beautiful ornament, and authentically a Napoleon relic.

The ante room was a repository of articles of art and vertu—dainty knick-knacks such as every woman loves, and a cabinet full of souvenirs and mascots. A golliwog, the Mascot-in-Chief, was the cabinet's presiding genius. A horse-shoe, also for luck, was made out of a piece of shell at Ypres by Captain Edmund Gwenn. A fine photograph of Miss Löhr's dramatic mentor, Mrs. Kendal, had a place of honour on the wall; also (I noted with a twinge of envy) two Garrick playbills. Another photograph, standing beside a basket of gorgeous flowers, bore this inscription by Mme. Réjane: "*A ma jolie camarade, Marie Lohr, a l'exquise Marie-Odile.*"

THE LATE MR. LAURI DE FRECE.

Mr. Lauri de Frece's dressing-room picture gallery at the Lyric Theatre rivalled Miss José Collins' at Daly's and Mr. W. H. Berry's at the Adelphi. It contained a remarkable collection of caricatures of himself and his fellow-artists. The walls were covered with the original work of famous British caricaturists.

Baron Bomba in "A Little Dutch Girl" described the atmosphere of the theatre as "most congenial" to his temperament.

"I have lived in it nearly all my life. In the course of my experience I have taken part in almost every line of entertainment with the exception of melodrama. The circus, the concert platform, high comedy, low comedy, musical plays and variety—nothing has come amiss to me.

"I made my first appearance on the stage at the age of ten in a musical playlet called 'The Night before the Pantomime' at the Gaiety Theatre, Liverpool.

"That was quite a few years ago. My first salary was £1 per week. At this time of the year, when the income tax falls due, there are moments when I almost wish it were the same to-day.

"When I was twelve I ran away and joined a circus. After a long spell of clowning I returned home repentant, and finished my education at Liverpool College.

"My father had always intended me for a commercial career so I took a spell at the desk. Late in 1900, I went to South Africa to join up. After a serious illness I returned to the stage in earnest.

"I have played in England since 1904, with the exception of one visit to America, when I went out in 'To-night's the Night,' and afterwards toured the States with my own company. Now I am settling down to the pleasant task of impersonating Baron Bomba at the Lyric for a long, long time."

LAUGHING LOPOKOVA.

Mme. Lydia Lopokova's laughing face became clouded, and her eyes filled at the thought of the measureless suffering in Russia. "But let us talk of happy things," she said. "We are young, and a new world is before us."

A gilt horseshoe bound with white heather, a first-night

gift, hung over the dressing-table. The walls were crowded with sketches by artist friends of the fairy of the ballet. An infinite number of costumes, wonderfully varied, and all beautifully made, filled the wardrobes and occupied every available space. "That is a very heavy dress," the dancer said, pointing to the one she wears in "The Good Humoured Ladies," "but this is made of gossamer," and she caressed the costume for "Les Sylphides."

There were hats and dainty silken shoes by the score. The hats matched the dresses in colour and form. "A pair of shoes only lasts for two performances. Most of them come from Italy, where they specialise in making strong, comfortable toes. The toes wear out immediately, and then I use the shoes for practising."

The carpet was strewn with red and white petals, and heaped on a table were masses of gorgeous blooms. "I love flowers, and these are bouquets from kind people in front. They remind me of sun and warmth and friendship. You see that fan? I brought it from Spain. I have it near me because it is so warm, so full of colour.

"This is the first time I have visited England. It is worth all the hardship we have suffered to be here.

"I love your public. They are so loyal, so generous, so affectionate; and although I feel very tired at the end of the day, for we practise and rehearse all day, it is a happy tiredness."

THINGS THAT HAWTREY KNOWS.

London's leading light comedian, Sir Charles Hawtrey, strolled airily into dressing-room No. 1 at the St. James' Theatre. He carried an armful of arum lilies, symbol of James Smith's blameless life in "His Lady Friends." The laughter which attended the presentation of the lilies at the end of the second act followed the actor to his dressing-room door.

"My first theatrical venture," said Sir Charles, "was to write and produce 'The Private Secretary,' which, as everybody knows, was founded on an old German farce. The late Sir Herbert Tree played the curate for the modest weekly salary of £15. When Tree resigned I engaged the late W. S. Penley to succeed him as the reverend gentleman

at £8 a week ! Penley remained under my management for six or seven years, during which period his salary was raised from time to time until it reached £100 a week."

Asked to define the terms farcical comedy, farce, and comedy, Sir Charles said :—

" Once start with the admission that it is possible for a man to masquerade as a woman without detection, as in 'Charley's Aunt,' and the situations that follow will be consistently farcical. I recall, for instance, one notable example of pure farce in 'The Brass Bottle,' wherein the emergence of a man from a bottle had to be accepted as within the realms of possibility.

" Farcical comedy is another name for farce. I believe the late Sir Charles Wyndham was the first man to use the description 'farcical comedy,' as he was one of the first to produce a three-act farce. All the farces of early Victorian days and prior thereto were in one act, and they generally preceded or ended the entertainment at the theatres. No one in those days thought of elaborating a one-act farce into a three-act farcical comedy.

" Pure comedy, on the other hand, tries to be a reflection of actual life, and should not have the extravagant situations or ideas that are liable and permissible and even necessary in farce. I recall that Sir Arthur Pinero labelled his earlier plays 'The Schoolmistress,' 'The Magistrate,' and 'Dandy Dick' as farces. They were, however, much nearer to farcical comedy, and were certainly the best instances of that class of work.

" It is the greatest mistake in the world to think that a farcical comedy does not need careful writing. It should have the closest attention to detail and the most brilliant lines that the author can think of. The interest in a farce must never be allowed to flag for one moment, and farce in acting should always be taken at a good speed. As a rule, there is not enough reflection, and it is seldom that a farce ever gives any great satisfaction in afterthought, nor will it stand much analysing.

" We get very few good comedies nowadays. The American so-called comedies are not nearly so brilliantly written as our English comedies have been in the past, but their farce writing is as good, if not better now, than anything we can turn out. The American vernacular is largely a language

of slang, and all dialogue of this kind is more suited to farce than to any other sort of play.

“ ‘Confusion,’ which was played at the Vaudeville many years ago, was as fine an example of good farce as has ever been staged. ‘Our Boys,’ of course, was a farce. I believe it was called a comedy by the late H. J. Byron, but it really was a farce.

“ In the early Victorian days farce was associated with red noses and knockabout business. That does not apply in the present day, except, possibly, in some of the music-halls.”

“ BOZ ” AND BRANSBY.

Micawber was on the London Coliseum stage, waiting for something to turn up. Uriah Heep followed him, very ‘umble, cringing, and hissing “ How I hate him ! ” Then came Daniel Peggotty, rugged, broken-hearted, lamenting the betrayal of his little Em’ly. Lastly, Serjeant Buzfuz addressing the jury ; spluttering and coughing, thrusting back his wig, exchanging sniggering confidences with an invisible judge, and denouncing the defendant Pickwick for his systematic villainy.

Micawber, Heep, Peggotty, Buzfuz all resolved themselves into one man—a great man at his work—the incomparable Dickens “ impersonator,” Mr. Bransby Williams.

The spirit of Dickens is kept alive on the stage to-day almost solely by Bransby Williams. Who and where are his coadjutors ? Sir Squire Bancroft, I believe, has dropped his Dickens readings. Sir John Martin-Harvey still plays Sydney Carton. That is all. The tale is told.

Lovers of Dickens, however, are as the sands of the sea for multitude. The applause of the Coliseum for Bransby Williams’ work had a ring in it that warmed your heart. You should have heard it when two rows of stalls were occupied by Henry Fielding Dickens, K.C., and his friends.

I experienced one of the thrills of my life during our little interview. The talk drifted to Irving. Mr. Williams suddenly, without warning, gave an Irving shriek. The artist seemed transformed. He WAS Irving. Ellen Terry has witnessed the same effect, and her testimony accords with mine.

The amazing feat was followed by about a dozen other

vignettes of actors past and present. Mr. Williams startled me with exact reproductions of the voices of Wilson Barrett and William Terriss. I heard again the bell-voiced Barrett as he appeared when I was a boy hugging the front rail of the gallery at the Court Theatre, Liverpool—spellbound.

CARPENTIER AND ELSIE JANIS.

Miss Elsie Janis, in a French officer's uniform, was putting up her fists to Carpentier when I looked into her dressing-room at the Palace Theatre. Fortunately for the champion, the call-boy intervened. A moment before, with Mrs. Janis listening admiringly, the actress had been trying vainly in voluble French to make Carpentier recall some happening at the front which the boxer could not, or would not, remember—hence her uplifted “dooks” and Capentier's prospective defeat.

Miss Janis and her mother were holding a reception of young war heroes. They included Mr. Maurice Chevalier, Mr. Tom Hearn (the Lazy Juggler, still in khaki), and Major W. C. Campbell, the aviator who brought down thirty observation balloons. A biscuit-coloured Pekingese, on a round eiderdown pillow, snoozed contentedly through the cross-fire of rapid talk. Otherwise the little scene, in its setting of dazzling lights, bright chintz covers and draperies, and glistening mirrors, was delightfully gay and animated.

The customary collection of mascots, without which no dressing-room would be complete, contained seven horse-shoes, tied with British colours, and hung in various parts of the room. The principal shoe was presented to Miss Janis thirteen years ago, when she made her first hit, in “The Vanderbilt Cup,” in New York. It has travelled with her everywhere, and, of course, is chiefly responsible for her successes. I have a suspicion, however, that Miss Janis' real mascot is Mrs. Janis—the most assiduously attentive mother in the world. “I had a terrible dream, an awful nightmare, last night,” said Mrs. Janis, “I dreamed that Elsie was married !”

HENSON, CHEERFUL AND WILLING.

Mr. Leslie Henson, while affixing the Medaille Sanitaire to his breastful of stage decorations at the Winter Garden Theatre, revelled in his plans for transforming his dressing-

room into an "antique," apartment. "That settle" he said, "is an Elizabethan bit—I dare you to say that it's only deal and brunswick black. The fireplace—now, there's a quaint old thing for you!—but don't touch it, please. I've ordered a vanload of old lanterns and brasses and rolls of flowered chintz, and when you come here again you will probably ask for Sir Walter Raleigh or my friend Bacon."

"Seriously, I'm awfully comfy here. Dressing-room a hop from the wings. No stairs to take your breath away. Energies all preserved for business. An artist gives a better show if his little comforts are considered."

The comedian's prize possession is autographed at the top by the Prince of Wales. It is a framed programme of the grand Christmas pantomime, "Aladdin," written by Henson, and produced at the Nouveau Theatre, Lille. "The Germans opened the theatre in 1914. The place was wreckage when I viewed it by candlelight in 1918. I was the first Allied actor to appear in it when we produced 'Aladdin' there in 1919."

A framed letter from General Birdwood also hangs on the wall. It is warmly worded, telling how Henson did much to maintain the soldiers' morale by "getting a good laugh out of them every night and helping so much to keep them always happy and contented." The letter concludes with a tribute to the "cheerful and willing way in which you invariably tackled all difficulties."

The comedian darted out of the room dressed as a French chauffeur. Half-a-dozen stage hands gathered round him in the wings. His invisible motor-car in which he was driving a general was about to explode. The racket was prodigious. One man worked an electric dynamo, another shot off a pistol close to my ear (twice!), there was a flash of blinding light, Henson flung himself on the stage, and a great wave of laughter rolled out from the auditorium.

When Henson came off the stage, cool as a cucumber, he remarked: "That entrance, in the original script, had the stage direction, 'Enter, pulling off motor-gloves.'"

DU MAURIER AT WYNDHAM'S.

Sir Gerald Du Maurier's dressing-room at Wyndham's is a little museum of stage curios. The walls are covered with original drawings by the actor's father, the late George Du

Maurier, the famous artist of "Punch." Interspersed among them are sketches by such artists as Nicholson and Max Beerbohm. A Nicholson of Barrie is autographed by the novelist "To Gerald." A Max Beerbohm is a vigorous impression of Haddon Chambers.

"That is the most life-like photograph of Henry Irving ever taken," said Sir Gerald, pointing to a snapshot. "This sword was worn by Irving in 'Coriolanus.' This bulky and faded old gamp was owned by Turner the painter. It has a sword blade in its stick. There is a sword, used by W. H. Kendal in 1880 in 'William and Susan,' Wills' version of 'Black-Ey'd Susan.'

"That old school cap stuck on the lamp globe is a souvenir of my time at Harrow. You will be interested in this photograph group of performers in an entertainment which included 'Cox and Box,' a skit on 'Box and Cox,' with music by Sir Arthur Sullivan, at the Adelphi in 1867. It was a 'Punch' performance, and Mark Lemon and George Du Maurier are in the group, as well as Tom Taylor, Sullivan, and Ellen Terry."

The actor's especial pride is a beautiful French time-piece. It dates from the eighteenth century, and was made by Beaumarchais, author of "Le Mariage de Figaro" and "Le Barbier de Seville." Beaumarchais' father was a clockmaker, and the dramatist started life at the craft.

"A good piece, isn't it?" said Du Maurier. "But it isn't the best thing in the room." The something better proved to be a photograph, on the actor's writing desk, of his three young daughters, Angela, Daphne, and Jeanne.

"Those box-office returns," he continued, pointing to a framed document, "are the figures of a week's booking for my brother's play at this theatre, 'An Englishman's Home.' My manager, Mr. Vaughan, declares that the item £722, taken in advance booking at the window, constitutes a record of the kind for any single theatrical performance in London."

I asked Sir Gerald to indicate what he considered the most gratifying feature of his successful eleven years' tenancy of Wyndham's. He replied:—"Every play we have produced here, with the exception of 'Diplomacy,' has been the work of English brains and hands."

ASCHE AT HIS MAJESTY'S.

Last, but not least, we come to the theatrical dressing-room *de luxe* of London—Mr. Oscar Asche's at His Majesty's. It is really a suite of rooms: first, a cosy sitting and robing room, then a making-up room, and beyond it a bathroom. The first apartment, panelled in mahogany, upholstered in leather, has a bright fire, a tidy writing-desk, and a large ornamental mirror. In a corner is a model stage set with a scene from "Cairo."

The walls are almost completely covered with portraits and sketches of Sir Herbert Tree in many of his famous characters, for this was also Sir Herbert's dressing-room. One picture arrests the eye, a lovely coloured print of Raeburn's "The McNab." An inscription below states that the picture, presented by Sir Thomas Dewar, is a coursing trophy, won by Mr. Asche's greyhound. "Coursing is my hobby," says Ali Shar, his burly figure looming enormously in the centre of the small but choice apartment. "One of my greyhounds won the Waterloo Plate in 1914."

PLAYS OF THE PERIOD.

“They are the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time.”

SHAKESPEARE.

CHAPTER IX

PLAYS OF THE PERIOD

THE BIOGRAPHICAL DRAMA.*

PARNELL IN A PLAY.

CHARLES STEWART PARNELL did not die in 1891, at the age of forty-five, according to the interesting political melodrama, "The Lost Leader," by Lennox Robinson, which was loudly applauded on its production at the Court Theatre. He feigned death, in order to escape the burden of his cares.

"How I laughed," he was made to say, "when I read of the thousands who followed my coffin—a coffin that contained the body of a poor nameless Russian immigrant!"

This fascinating notion resulted in the stage reincarnation of Parnell during the Sinn Fein crisis of 1917. When the play began, he was masquerading as an innkeeper in a remote part of Ireland—a small, bent, weak old man, with white hair and beard. He was unmasked by hypnotic means—a strongly acted scene—and at the bare mention of his real name he was magically metamorphosed into a tall, erect, strenuous veteran, ready to fling himself into the fray.

The news of Parnell's dramatic reappearance was spread by a London journalist who happened to be on the spot. Representatives of the numerous Irish parties hurried to the scene, anxious to learn the political plans of the uncrowned king.

They gathered to hear his message on a hilltop—the Standing Stones on Knockpatrick—a picturesque scene, with the lost leader posing (in a Victorian cape) against two high, perpendicular stones silhouetted in a purple haze against a rosy sunset.

The message of salvation, alas! was undelivered. A blow

* Biographical dramas in prospect for the London stage include "The Boderer" (with Miss Julia Neilson as Mary Queen of Scots) and Mr. John Drinkwater's "Mary Stuart" and "Oliver Cromwell." Miss Clemence Dane's "Will Shakespeare" is reviewed on page 43.

from a stick intended for another felled Parnell before it could be spoken, and he died with the fateful words on his lips. It must have been a truly wonderful message, this solution to the Irish problem, for Parnell declared that a child could understand it, and that it could be written on half a sheet of note-paper.

The play, therefore, led nowhere and achieved nothing beyond the provision of a more or less convincing two hours' entertainment. It was a skilful enough work within its limits, and Mr. Norman McKinnel played the ever-futile hero most impressively in his well-known reserved-force, strong-man style. In make-up, accent, and demeanour it was a masterly performance.

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Only a spark, apparently, was needed to fire the galleryites on the first night of "The Lost Leader."

A Sinn Feiner appeared in the piece. "You think I'll join you?" inquired Parnell. The gallery burst into a round of applause when the Sinn Feiner replied, emphatically, "I know you will!"

Later on, however, Parnell disillusioned the gods by admonishing the Sinn Feiner to "try to understand the English."

"OLD ABE."

The Lyric Theatre at Hammersmith is the Mecca of all who appreciate good drama. John Drinkwater's "Abraham Lincoln," which was produced there by the Birmingham Repertory Company, is a notable achievement in the loftier domain of the theatre. In details it is open to criticism, especially in regard to the introduction of choruses in the classic style. The staging, too, is necessarily at a disadvantage in a band-box theatre. But, broadly speaking, the play and its representation came within measurable distance of sublimity.

I wanted to see this impressive drama on a roomy West End stage, without the action-hampering choruses, and with larger scenic effects. The chorus note is not in itself discordant. It might, conceivably, enhance the dramatic effect if the verses were more expository of the story, and less pretentiously symbolical. Mr. William J. Rea's Lincoln is also subject to detraction on account of the actor's Irish

accent and his lack of height (Lincoln was 6ft. 4ins.). These, however, are surface aspects of an impersonation remarkable for subtle insight into the manner and character of the great original. Mr. William J. Rea is an artist.

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President Lincoln's biographer, Lord Charnwood, attended the *première* of "Abraham Lincoln" at Hammersmith. In answer to my request for his opinion of the play, he sent me the following :—

" Mr. John Drinkwater has been wonderfully successful, I think, in bringing out in a few striking and simple scenes the dominant notes of Lincoln's character and principles. He has fearlessly accepted the limitations which the requirements of drama impose on such a work, and has not endeavoured any more than Shakespeare might have done, always to adhere to the literal fact as to the exact political situation with which Lincoln had to cope, or as to the precise connection in which particular incidents occurred or particular words were spoken.

" So, too, he has somewhat daringly associated composite or wholly fictitious characters with well-known historical figures.

" Again, he has not made the vain attempt to crowd into his portrait of Lincoln all the salient traits of that exceedingly subtle character, such as, for example, the unsubduable humour which was as marked as his melancholy.

" All this being so, I expect that I, who am very considerably versed in the literal, detailed, and dry facts from which the dramatist has had resolutely in some degree to abstract himself, am perhaps in a position to judge when I say that Mr. Drinkwater has hit his mark."

NAPOLEON ON THE STAGE.

Mr. Herbert Trench's "Napoleon," which the Stage Society presented at the Queen's Theatre, was in the genre of "Abraham Lincoln." It resembled Mr. John Drinkwater's drama in many ways. Its prose poetry—rising at the climax to actual blank verse—was at least equally well inspired, while Mr. Norman Wilkinson's stage setting—all in French grey, with slightly impressionistic backgrounds—was similarly artistic. The production altogether reflected the

greatest credit on author, actors, and producers. It was a work of art cast in a mould of beauty, literary and dramatic.

The play acted as well as it reads, and it was exceedingly well performed. Although its chief interest was Mr. Trench's portrait of Napoleon, the purely fictional plot was continuously arresting ; and the character of the man who beards the Emperor and endeavours to turn him to higher purposes, Geoffrey Wickham, was almost as fascinating as Napoleon's, thanks to Mr. Leon Quartermaine's excellent playing of the part.

The period of the play was that fateful August in 1805 when Villeneuve's loss of heart at sea impelled Napoleon to give up his cherished dream of invading England, and to march, instead, on Germany.

Ere that happened, the young idealist, Wickham—a maker of sea maps and an authority on Channel tides—a man of Anglo-French birth, and therefore politically disinterested—made a brave attempt, which cost him his life, to persuade the Man of Destiny to convert his swords to ploughshares—to abandon his schemes of world conquest—to retrace and divert his steps in the paths of peace.

With that object in view, Wickham, at great personal peril, lured Napoleon to sea. The adventures leading up to the moment when the idealist and the man of action confronted each other in the cabin of Wickham's sloop were stirringly represented, but the whole purport of the play—showing, as it did, how no influence short of fatality could deter Napoleon from his ambition of world domination—was revealed in the finely phrased parley between the two men in the sloop's cabin.

Napoleon listened to the idealist's rhapsodic adjurations sympathetically, with a deeper appreciation of their spiritual value than the real Napoleon would probably have displayed. Impressed, but still adamant, he asked : “ What would you have me do ? ” Wickham replied :—

“ Up to this night, you have made great wars. Return,
And make peace great ; build the new France ;
Deepen her liberties ; subtilise her laws,
And make her justice tender.”

“ *Trash !* ” exclaimed Napoleon. The Emperor returned to his “ muddy work of murder.” Before doing so, however,

Mr. Trench caused him to fall captive to the British, ashore near Dover, and Wickham's mother allowed him to go free. "There's so deep a power against you," she told the Emperor, "that we can rest upon it." Poetic, no doubt, but a trifle "steep."

Mr. Trench did not invest his conception of Napoleon with any new romantic humanities. The study was a firmly limned representation of the Emperor as history records him—a superman, but fallible and blundering. The late Mr. A. E. George realised the character convincingly. He looked the part perfectly, and one of his poses recalled the famous picture of the Emperor's "Last Phase." Mr. Quartermaine's and Miss Sybil Thorndike's emotional acting as Wickham and his mother was also a powerful factor in the play's success.

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Stage Napoleons besides Mr. A. E. George have included Henry Irving ("Madame Sans-Gene"), Martin Harvey ("The Exile"), Lewis Waller ("Mademoiselle Mars"), Murray Carson and Hermann Vezin ("A Royal Divorce"), Sydney Valentine ("The Dynasts"), Cyril Maude ("The Creole"), Sir John Hare ("The Great Conspiracy"), Matthew Brodie ("Duchess of Dantzig"), Granville Barker ("A Man of Destiny"), and Harry Pleon (in the music-halls).

A woman played Napoleon (Charlotte Saunders) in a burlesque at the old Strand Theatre. In Robert Buchanan's "Shadow of the Sword," Napoleon appeared without speaking a word. According to Henry Lecomte's book, "*Napoleon et l'Empire Racontés par le Théâtre*," between five and six hundred dramas, comedies, and operettas had the Little Corporal for their hero prior to the year 1899.

THE SON OF NAPOLEON.

Edmond Rostand's poetic play, "L'Aiglon," the tragedy of Napoleon's son, was acted in English for the first time in this country immediately after Armistice Day, at a Globe Theatre charity matinee.

It was the most ambitious entertainment of the kind, artistically, of the whole war period. A fashionable audience, many of whose members had paid from five to twenty-five guineas for stalls, sat for four hours enchanted by the melody of Rostand's verse (admirably translated by Mr. Louis N.

Parker), by the rare beauty of the scenery and costumes, and by the wistful charm of Miss Marie Lohr's impersonation of the hapless boy prince—the Eaglet, son of the Eagle.

Miss Lohr's performance was remarkable. The part of the Duke of Reichstadt, which Bernhardt played so finely, is even longer than Hamlet, and the task of memorising the lines for a single production, apart from the strain of acting, must have been exhausting. The actress, however, was word perfect. Better still, she declaimed the poetry with excellent understanding, and with great power. Her appearance, too, in the dazzling white uniform of an Austrian officer was strikingly picturesque.

“L'Aiglon,” in its English garb, was an achievement of more than ordinary significance. It pointed the way of our post-war theatre to worthier achievement.

STAMP YOUR FOOT, POMPEY!

Mr. John Masefield's ideals were lofty enough in his “Pompey the Great,” which Sir Frank Benson presented at the St. Martin's Theatre, but the manner of their expression sorely tried the average onlooker's sense of the ridiculous.

The Roman soldiers in this tragedy of Pompey's war with Cæsar could have worn khaki, and the Roman women hobble skirts from Hanover-square, without impairing to any great extent the character and quality of the dialogue.

No wonder there were furtive titters and giggles which refused to be suppressed, or that some of the auditors went out and sought relief in “Sylvia's Lovers” at the theatre next door!

The modern colloquialisms in “Pompey the Great” compassed its undoing in the theatre. They had been considerably weeded out since the original production by the Stage Society ten years ago, but enough remained to damn the piece as acted drama.

Sir Frank Benson, as Pompey, was playing in one of London's smallest and most intimate theatres, yet he declaimed in tones that would have made the rafters ring in the Albert Hall. There were impressive moments, of course, and very occasional spurts of cooling reticence, but the opening note of “Stamp your foot, Pompey!” resounded incessantly from first to last.

WAT TYLER'S RISING.

There were splashes of mediæval pageantry in a new play at the Royal Victoria Hall, "Wat Tyler," by Halcott Glover, which made Old London live again. If the author had given less oratory and more of this intermittent life and colour his play would have been a very good thing indeed.

No wonder the rising failed. The leaders, according to Mr. Glover, cackled it to death. Wat Tyler, Jack Straw, and John Ball—especially John Ball!—could have talked the Archbishop of Canterbury's head off the pike on which it was borne over London Bridge.

The pageantry atoned for all. When they put a crowd on at the Old Vic. it really is a crowd, and not a Quakers' meeting. There they were, on the drawbridge of Old London Bridge, unreservedly living up to the historian Froissart's description of the scene, making "such a shout and cry as if all the devils in hell had been among them."

It was a capital picture-play, but dramatically ill-knit. One of the speeches—John Ball's crack-brained soliloquy in prison—seemed to last about twenty minutes, and although Mr. Ernest Milton spoke it finely one could scarce forbear to yawn. The audience returned thanks in the customary Vic-static manner when the author duly appeared.

LORAINES CYRANO.

"Welcome back!" exclaimed a voice in the gallery at the Garrick Theatre when Mr. Robert Loraine came forward at the end of a wonderful performance of "Cyrano de Bergerac." The audience roared its approval, and the actor's reception will long remain in the memory of those who heard it.

The ovation had been finely earned. Mr. Loraine's enactment of Rostand's big-nosed hero had held the house enthralled. The difficult character—surely one of the most trying in all dramatic literature—seemed to have presented no obstacles to an actor whose equipment for the part—physical, vocal, intellectual—was complete.

The many-sided hero—swashbuckler, poet, lover—was ideally realised by Mr. Loraine. It is a role compounded of comedy, sentiment, pathos, tragedy—the whole gamut of human emotion. Mr. Loraine boxed the histrionic compass in an impersonation that will make a lasting impression on

the renascent movement which may be beginning on the English stage.

If Mr. Loraine's achievement was a triumph, so was that of the producer, Mr. Cochran. This so-called commercial manager had the hardihood to present a great dramatic poem in a manner worthy of the work. He grudged nothing in the task, either of labour or lucre. The play was greatly put on the stage, and greatly performed.

Its tremendous scenes of chivalric fervour and high poetic ardour captivated the senses. It was an evening of rare enchantment—of word-magic and the witchery of romance.

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Rostand's beautiful play was afterwards presented at Drury Lane. Its pictorial values were enhanced by the unrivalled stage facilities of our noblest theatre. The lighting effects were remarkable in themselves, to say nothing of the additional artistries of grouping and movement obtainable from a spacious setting. These advantages were especially observable in the lovely balcony and convent scenes, where delicately graded illumination was required.

Mr. Loraine's *Cyrano* was magnificent. His declamatory speeches rang through the house, thrilling every listener. In subtlety of diction also the performance was emotionally enchanting. I shall never forget the triplex intensity of pathetic expression with which the actor, in the balcony scene, invested Cyrano's adjuration to the would-be Romeo: "Climb ! Climb ! Climb !" That moment, as interpreted by Robert Loraine, is one of the greatest in modern drama.

LORAINE AS DEBURAU.

There was a theatre within a theatre and a stage on a stage at the Ambassadors Theatre, for the play, "*Deburau*," by Sacha Guitry, told the life-story of Pierrot the First, the clown and pantomimist, Jean Gaspard Deburau, a genius of the Paris footlights in the 'forties.

At the beginning, the Follies Theatre was meanly equipped. The showman, before the curtain rose on its auditorium, stood at the entrance banging drum and cymbals and calling on the people to walk up. Then the curtain rose, and you saw the audience, silhouetted in the gloom before the

miniature stage rapturously applauding Pierrot and hailing the advent of the bright new star.

Alas ! for the sorry tale, when you witnessed that scene again, at the finish of the play, there were hisses and boos and cat-calls for Pierrot.

Pierrot (Mr. Robert Loraine) had run his course. The clown of clowns surrendered his cap and bells to his successor —Pierrot the Second, his son, Charles Deburau, who—so history relates—jingled his inherited bells right merrily.

Between the rise and fall of Pierrot there was much to tell. The narrative dealt poetically with Deburau's unrequited love for the original of Dumas' *Lady of the Camelias*, Marie Duplessis (Miss Madge Titheradge).

In the poetic treatment by Guitry's translator, Granville Barker, prose and verse are mingled, and the metre hopped and skipped in lines like Walt Whitman's set to rhyme. The effect was as choppy as the method, but as spoken by Mr. Loraine, with elocutionary skill and beauty, it was a good deal more delightful than displeasing.

For lovers of the theatre, "Deburau" had a savour that was irresistible. The play was pictorially attractive and tenderly sentimental ; and the acting of Mr. Loraine and his colleagues did justice to its numerous deserts.

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The critics came to loggerheads over Mr. Barker's unconventional translation of Sacha Guitry's play. I was emphatically pro-Barker. "Deburau" was not quite fantasy. Barker, therefore, gave us not quite poetry. The dialogue was an odd, but fascinating admixture of prose, blank verse, and rhyme. I loved it. A minor poet of major merit whom I encountered in the stalls was so impressed by it that he could hardly trust himself to speak.

The jewel of this novel literary setting was Deburau's oration to his son on the histrionic temperament. The great Pierrot had run his course, and his mantle was about to fall on his son, Charles Deburau.

In this long and beautiful speech, lasting about a quarter of an hour, and superbly spoken by Robert Loraine, Deburau was like Hamlet addressing the players. A single brief extract will illustrate the translational scheme :—

And—*love your work.*
Remember the actor's calling
Is the finest in the world.
Is it something a little galling
When, with a lip politely curled
And a supercilious smirk,
You are told to your face
That the theatre has no place
Among important things?
I tell you, it's an art
That has its springs
In the heart
Of all mankind.

I read somewhere that this was like the stuff that you get in provincial pantomimes !!! Oh, my great aunt !

“MRS. PAT.” IN “MADAME SAND.”

The fascinating study of a man-woman (George Sand in trousers) presented by Mrs. Patrick Campbell might have been a memorable analysis of sex-psychology if the author, the American dramatist, Philip Moeller, had taken his subject seriously. Moeller's treatment was flippant, bordering on the farcical. His tone was mockingly humorous—a satire, principally, on the literary temperament. The motive of George Sand's numerous amours with famous men—Chopin, de Musset and the rest—did not concern the author. Was it merely sexuality, or the ungratified longing for reciprocated affection?

The real George Sand, whom Mr. Moeller should have portrayed, was probably a maternal nymphomaniac. That large word, coined by one of her biographers, describes her less as a creature of erotic impulses than a woman “mothering” her lovers. Take that view of her character, and a new light breaks on a passage of the play which appeared on the first night to be superficially amusing—the message, written by George, “I've taken Chopin home to put the poor, tired boy to bed.”

Only thus casually, therefore, did Moeller strike at the real George Sand. His portrait was little more than a lightning cartoon. “Mrs. Pat,” on those restricted lines, served her author brilliantly. The actress had done nothing better

since her Paula Tanqueray. She even looked well in trousers—a brown velvet morning suit, with enormous white collar picturesquely disarranged at the chest—but she was even more attractive in a crinoline. If Moeller had provided the smallest opportunity for sincerity, “Mrs. Pat” would have seized it. The performance dwelt almost solely on George’s lighter attributes, particularly with her passion for making “copy” for her novels out of every fleeting incident of her love affairs. Each time Mrs. Pat took up her pencil to “make a note of it,” the audience laughed delightedly.

ST. BYRON !

The poet Byron—of all men!—was stage-canonicalised in “The Pilgrim of Eternity,” by K. K. Ardaschir. Mr. Ardaschir, rightly or wrongly, placed a theatrical halo round the head of the perverted genius who—being all things to all women—was one of the most notorious profligates of the nineteenth or any other century. This doubtful feat was accomplished by completely ignoring the reprehensible side of Byron’s character and etherealising his nobler qualities. He appeared as the apostle of European democracy, battling against monarchies and tyrannies, and, by way of apotheosis, going to a martyr’s death on the battlefield.

Mr. Ardaschir’s astonishing creation was not a composite portrait of the poet, revealing in its aspects the heights that were scaled and the depths that were plumbed by that many-sided prodigy of Parnassus. Scarcely a hint was given of his discreditable amours or the uncondonable excesses which drove him to an early grave, depriving the world of his marvellous abilities at the age of thirty-six.

What we did see was a well-nigh unsullied hero of high romance, whose portrait would adorn the boudoir of sweet seventeen—the superficial curled darling, the Apollo Belvidere of what Charles Lamb described as “The Utopia of gallantry.”

We beheld him loving and caressing the only one of his innumerable inamoratas who won a measure of his constancy, and won it well—the eighteen-year-old Countess Guiccholi. We saw him boldly bearding political tyrants in their dens and turning on them the tables of their own conspiracies. We heard him declaiming rhapsodies from his immortal verse,

and with him we thrilled at the sound of the guns of liberty, calling him to his last rest in the isles of Greece.

The play was therefore out of court as a Byron document except in so far as it visualised—vividly and accurately—the poet's grand passion for political liberty.

In that respect, Mr. Ardaschir was reasonably faithful to history. There can be little doubt that Byron's passionate devotion to the democratic causes in Italy and Greece was inspired by generous instincts, and that he was in very truth a martyr to the self-sacrificing exercise of that devotion.

There were skill and grace in Mr. Ardaschir's drama, and a bright pictorial setting.

Mr. Cowley Wright, as Byron, looked the part ideally.

The Byron collar, the Byron smile, the Byron gait—all the historic attributes were there, and in addition qualities which Byron may not have possessed, such as a voice to delight the gods and an engagingly manly air.

There was admirable acting, too, besides Mr. Wright's distinguished Byron, notably Miss Yvonne Arnaud's charming Countess Guiccholi, Mr. Edmund Leahy's glowering Cardinal Riverola, and Mr. Halliwell Hobbes' clever character study of grunting senility, the Guiccholi's septuagenarian husband.

The scenes by Hann and McCleery of Italian rivers and mountains, palaces, terraces and gardens, were lovely to the gaze and full of Byronic atmosphere.

The run of "The Pilgrim of Eternity" at the Duke of York's lasted seven days.

DRAMAS OF BETRAYAL.

"Obstetricdrama,"—"Ibsenity,"—"Inspissated Gloom," were among the catch-phrases of the 'nineties. They recurred to mind in connection with a recent epidemic of dramas of betrayal. I hesitate to class in that category Mr. St. John Ervine's fine play, "John Ferguson"—but "Ferguson" began it. There followed, in quick succession, "Grierson's Way," "Tom Trouble," and "Sinners Both"—all Obstetric Dramas, based on the imminence of the Unwanted Child.

Is this sort of thing, I wonder, what the public wants? It would be impossible, even if it were desirable to eliminate the agony of the distressed girl from the purview of the modern

dramatist. But a little of that agony, like the British Army, goes a dashed long way.

In "Sinners Both," at the Kingsway, we had a massive elderly woman badgering a middle-aged man to marry her because of her condition, for which he was responsible. The spectacle of these wrangling "lovers" might have been supportable if they had erred in the flush of youth. As a character in "Carnival" remarked, "Remember she is young; we must make allowances for youth." The Kingsway betrayer was made additionally objectionable by the fact that he wore the cloth of a Dissenting minister. What has Non-conformity done to be thus gratuitously insulted? "Sinners Both" left such a nasty taste in the mouth that the less that is said about it the better.

Miss Sybil Thorndike had one of these betrayed girl parts in John Burley's drama of Yorkshire life, "Tom Trouble," at the Holborn Empire. She played it sympathetically and delicately, like the artist that she is. The character gave further proof of her abounding versatility. We might have had another "Hindle Wakes" in the play itself if the dramatist had not destroyed the requisite sense of conflict by prematurely killing off the betrayer and making all the other characters—including the girl's father, mother, and lover—more or less insensible to the gravity of her condition. If that attitude is typical of Yorkshire village morality—as it purports to be—God help Yorkshire! John Burley's dialogue was the most outspoken that the censor had passed for years. It was good stuff dialectically, but it did call a spade a spade.

This happily fleeting disposition towards inspissated gloom in the theatre (was it a reaction after the tomfoolery of the war period?) was observable also in John Galsworthy's playlet "Defeat," at the Hammersmith Lyric. In this we had a harrowing picture of a German girl (powerfully played by Miss Cathleen Nesbitt) reduced by war's injustices to the level of the street. Innocent victims of the war were doubtless as poignantly numerous on the side of victory as of defeat. Was it necessary, at that moment, for Mr. Galsworthy to take the case of a German victim to illustrate the theme?

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A genuinely affecting drama of a girl's betrayal drove a first-night audience nearly wild with enthusiasm at the Lyric

Theatre, Hammersmith. The play, "John Ferguson," by St. John Ervine had a suggestion of greatness.

The drawbacks were mainly psychological. John Ferguson's religiosity appeared to be exaggerated. He invoked the Deity overmuch. Mrs. Ferguson's attitude towards her stricken daughter was cruelly unmotherly. The son's actions after killing his sister's betrayer were unconvincingly dilatory. A good deal of the family agony over the son's crime was superfluous, because no jury, least of all an Irish one, would convict the boy of murder in the first degree.

In the heat of first-night excitement such defects are apparent only to the cool and trained observer. They were rendered nearly nugatory at Hammersmith by the dramatist's splendid technique, both in dialogue and construction, and by the skill of the performers, who acted the play magnificently.

The finest thing in the drama was Mr. J. M. Kerrigan's cringing craven, Jimmy Cæsar. Jimmy funk'd the job of avenging the girl he loved, and the knowledge of his cowardice ate into his heart. Mr. Kerrigan's portrayal of the character struck to the roots of its being. The actor's art was positively surgical. It exposed the very soul of Jimmy Cæsar. It probed the innermost recesses of the coward's conscience, and flung him torn and bleeding. Mr. Kerrigan's interpretative finesse was blended with vocal and physical power. He illustrated Henry Irving's dictum that "the first duty of an actor is to be heard." Every word, every gesture, every flitting expression of face and manner held the audience enthralled. Mr. Kerrigan may not be a great actor in the comprehensive sense of the term. His range is probably limited, for he is Irish to the core. But this particular performance of Mr. Kerrigan was, in itself, tremendous.

The performance of the play altogether was a feast of good acting. Mr. William J. Rae's ultra-Biblical John Ferguson had moments of rhapsodic beauty. Miss Maire O'Neill's old Irish mother was racily ironical. The betrayed daughter of Moyna MacGill wrung the heart in the scene of the girl's sobbing confession.

Mr. Miles Malleson's ragged vagrant, shivering in the ingle-nook, was a rich study in the humorous-grotesque—hardly, perhaps, in the correct Hibernian spirit, but as enjoyably Mallesonian as one of this comedian's Shakespearean clowns.

"THE RIGHT TO STRIKE."

Seldom has a theatre audience been worked up to such a pitch of excitement as the audience at the Garrick Theatre was during the first performance of "The Right to Strike," a new play by a hitherto unknown dramatist, Mr. Ernest Hutchinson.*

The gallery, midway through the piece, booed and hissed. There were numerous expressions of protest, but in the end the art of the playwright triumphed over all, and Mr. Hutchinson was awarded a great ovation. The boos and hisses, mingled with applause, followed a scene opening with the line, "You bloody murderer!"—a line which the Censor banned, but afterwards permitted to be spoken.

A strike of railwaymen was in progress in Valleyhead, Lancashire. Valleyhead, a town of 100,000 inhabitants, was an isolated community, absolutely dependent on its branch railway. The strikers knew their power, and they declared war to the knife. They reckoned without the medical profession. A group of local doctors so deeply resented the strikers' policy, aimed at the general community, that they engaged in motor-lorry relief service. A wire stretched across the road caused the death of Dr. Eric Miller, Dr. Miller's son (late R.A.M.C.) and the friend of Dr. Wrigley.

When Dr. Wrigley heard of Eric's death, he was beside himself with passion. He rushed into a conciliation meeting, and shouted at the men's leader, Ben Ormerod, "You bloody murderer!"

Then Dr. Wrigley flung the gauntlet to the strikers. "I will not attend any railwayman," he said, "or any railwayman's family while this strike continues, nor will any doctor in Valleyhead, nor in the whole country when the facts are known. Now, you Mr. Working-man!"

"You daren't," retorted Ben Ormerod. "You must by Act of Parliament."

When the other doctors agreed the storm broke loose in the gallery. "That's a damned fine thing!" a voice exclaimed. The booing was considerable, but the fall of the curtain on the act, immediately afterwards, was greeted without dissent largely owing to a beautiful piece of acting by Mr. Holman Clark as the doctor stricken by the loss of his son.

* This promising young playwright died in 1921.

The third and fourth acts showed the doctors' anti-strike strike in progress, as well as more or less violent meetings and altercations between the railwaymen's leaders, the railway officials, a legal representative of the Government, and a solicitor to the British Medical Association. These characters all distinctively drawn, and finely acted, spoke in such provocatively disputatious language that the sympathies of the audience were swayed this way and that.

Each side, at last, claimed a victory.

The wife of the strike leader, Ben Ormerod, lay at death's door. Only one man could save her. Only Dr. Wrigley, the strikers' sworn enemy, could perform the difficult and dangerous operation that would save the woman's life.

Dr. Wrigley said to Ben Ormerod : " You killed my dearest friend. We wanted coal, food, medicine. Did you bring them to us ? The Medical Association has struck me off the register because I struck. For the right to strike I have sacrificed my livelihood and lost my dearest friend."

The father of the dead doctor cut the Gordian knot. The young widow helped him. In a speech admirably worded and appealingly spoken by the actress (Miss Marjorie Day) the widow gently reproved the doctors for having forgotten that " we are all God's children." Much more she said to that text, and, when she had finished her lesson, Dr. Wrigley donned his white doctor's overalls and did his duty.

The play received the rendering it deserved. Several of the performances were artistic cameos. Mr. Lauderdale Maitland was the well-intentioned Labour leader to the life, and his Lancashire dialect was perfect. Mr. Holman Clark, Mr. Bassett Roe, Mr. Charles Kenyon, Mr. Leon M. Lion, Miss Laura Smithson, and Miss Lilian Christine all contributed well-observed studies of character.

* * * * *

The producer of " The Right to Strike," Mr. Leon M. Lion, is a man who may do great things in the theatre. In conversation (and he is a good talker) he conveys the impression of being all brains and no body. With his sallow complexion, black hair, burning eyes, slight physique, and rapid flow of language, he is a zealot to his finger-tips—a zealot of the theatre and of dramatic art in every shape and form.

Mr. Lion was thirty-nine and he had been twenty-three

years on the stage when, in 1918, he sprang into prominence in the four-fold capacity of manager, part-author, producer, and principal actor in "The Chinese Puzzle." His performance of the Marquis Chi Lung in that play was a revelation of multiple adaptability. In make-up alone the character was a masterly creation.

The achievement was made possible by years of varied experience. Mr. Lion had toured with Forbes-Robinson in Shakespearean drama, and in the George Edwardes musical comedies, and had played a curious diversity of characters with Sir Herbert Tree at His Majesty's. Having "made good" with "The Chinese Puzzle," he applied his gifts to management.

A GREAT DRURIODRAMA.

East was West at Drury Lane when Mr. Arthur Collins brought to London an appreciable portion of the Sahara desert. Real sand, real Arabs, real camels—all the paraphernalia of Saharan life was visible and audible in "The Garden of Allah," the play by Robert Hichens and Mary Anderson based on Mr. Hichens' novel of that name.

Stage make-believe could no further go. A grand climax of realism was attained in the sandstorm scene, when the dust of the Sahara permeated to the stalls. Occupants of the front rows looked like millers. They talked of gas-masks in the interval, and suggested that Mr. Arthur Collins should invite the public to come unto these yellow sands. Yes, East was indeed West at Drury Lane.

The sandstorm may be written down as one of Mr. Collins' most remarkable achievements. The curtain rose on a Bruce-Smith panorama of illimitable stretches of sand billowing to the far horizon beneath an azure sky. Along a sand-hill in the foreground there passed in vivid silhouette a procession of camels, horses, donkeys, sheep and goats, ridden driven and tended by white-robed Arabs. One of the camels bore a palanquin on its hump. The donkeys carried wicker panniers, and a droll little baby camel undulated comically in the throng.

At nightfall, myriads of stars twinkled in the firmament. The caravan of the desert was bathed in translucent moonlight. Then, as the skies lowered, dogs barked and wild animals bayed and howled in the distance. A sudden calm,

and the storm broke. Hillocks of sand swirled upward, eddying and spiralling in a thousand shapes. Sky and earth were as one. There were sounds as of rushing waters ; then dissolving mists, shadows in the moonlight, the clear, cool dawn, and peace.

Nature in happier mood appeared in an oasis of the desert, a lovely scene by Joseph and Phil Harker—the garden of Count Anteoni, an arboretum of towering palms and tropical plants and flowers. Desert life in all its colours and varied movement was depicted in verandahs, streets, and dancing houses—places of tragedy and of greed and violence, where, to the sound of flute and tom-tom, lithe bodies swayed and long knives found their billets in amorous breasts.

The note of the play was struck when the muezzin, from the mosque tower, called the faithful to prayer—a deeply spiritual note, incessant in the dialogue, and heightened in effect by impressive musical accompaniment, the work of Sir Landon Ronald, who conducted, and of Mr. Albert Sammons, whose violin solo in the orchestra was loudly applauded.

“ Peace, and even happiness, are only to be found in self-sacrifice.”

That, perhaps, was the moral of the tale. The story would have been clearer, and possibly more effective as it progressed, if a clue to the hero’s past had been given earlier in the action. Mr. Godfrey Tearle’s virile portrayal of a soul in agony would have moved the audience more if they had understood from the outset the motive of his inward strivings. It was not until the concluding scene, in a wonderful speech ten minutes long, beginning with the line, “ This is my torture,” that Mr. Tearle was permitted to unravel the mystery of Boris Androvsky.

The man, it then appeared, was the young ex-Trappist monk, Father Antoine. He had lived in the great silence of the monastery near Tunis for seventeen years, toiling in the fields, sleeping on the hard boards, dedicated to God. One day he realised his void—a longing for companionship “ for the presence of a woman’s arm around his neck, for a woman’s breath upon his cheek.”

So Father Antoine broke his priestly vow, and, as Boris Androvsky, found love in the Sahara—the Garden of Allah.

Love, but not peace. " His body had risen up to assassinate his soul."

Amid the terrors of the sandstorm the soul reconquered the body. The woman whom " Boris Androvsky " had made his desert wife shared his sacrifice. In the pathetic last scene of the play the woman passed her hands caressingly over the monastery door through which the penitent had returned, exclaiming as he went, " *Mea maxima culpa!* Let me atone ! "

The part of the recusant monk in this superfine melodrama is full of opportunities for declamatory display, and Mr. Godfrey Tearle made the success of his career in the role. His delivery of the Monk's beautifully phrased apologia, or speech of confession, was not only a true cry from the heart, but a memorable elocutionary feat. The actor's triumph—for the audience fairly rose at him—was shared by Miss Madge Titheradge as the sacrificial heroine, and by Mr. Basil Gill as Count Anteoni.

There have been several productions at Drury Lane more startling than " The Garden of Allah," but few worthier, and none—among strictly modern plays—more earnestly inspired.

* * * * *

A first principle of stage effect is that an occurrence should be imitated, not actually exhibited. Roughly speaking, the stage manager who weakly resorts to real water and real fire for representations of cascades and burning buildings is a lesser artist than the one who employs tumbling tinsel and fluttering plumes. Bearing that principle in mind, the following stage episodes may be cited as examples of how not to do it:—

1. A really blind man, Dr. Clancy, performing the part of the blind prophet in " *Edipus* " at Drury Lane in 1744.

2. The Greek actor, Polus, using the urn which contained the ashes of his only son when sobbing over the urn which was supposed to enshrine the remains of Orestes.

3. The death of Hercules in " *Hercules Furens* " represented in ancient Rome by the burning on the stage of a criminal sentenced to death.

4. The modern employment in stage sulphur mines and sand-storms of real sulphur and sand, or equivalent material which is blown among the audience.

Illusion is not attained, but disturbed, by such means. The stage should hold a mirror up to Nature—give Nature her reflection, not her embodied self. A theatre audience should

be supposedly unseen onlookers, non-existent to the performers. It is bad art when, in Mr. Galsworthy's "The Skin Game," the audience is made to play the part of a gathering at an auction sale, with a bidder among them shouting to the auctioneer on the stage. It is bad art (in a lesser degree because here there is little pretence of illusion) when show girls in "Jig-Saw!" invade the auditorium flinging scents and sweets. It is bad art when, in "The Garden of Allah," the sand-storm gets into the nostrils of the audience, causing them to cough and sneeze.

That is what happened at the *première* of that play at Drury Lane. The incident violated the one great principle of theatrical effect: that, on the stage, false should be true and the unreal real.

There is much virtue in impressionism if it be not carried to extremes. Mr. Collins' pictorial methods at Drury Lane are materialistic to the *n*th degree. Within their artistic limitations, they are the most successful methods of their kind on earth; so successful that I find a critic informing his astonished readers that "The Garden of Allah" is "by far the most artistic production ever seen on any stage." I wipe my glasses and read the sentence again to make sure that I have read aright!

All the realistic pictures at the Lane will not for the above reasons absolutely delude you into the belief that you are witnessing the actual scenes they are supposed to represent. The more they invade your organs of the senses—especially your nostrils—the less likely you are to be deluded. On the other hand, the sandstorm and Eastern garden scenes did enchant the eye, while they left a little to the imagination. They were among the greatest things, in their way, that Mr. Arthur Collins had attempted.

The play itself was more sincere, and therefore more convincing than the average Drury Lane drama written to the stage carpenter's requirements. In its performance there were two splendid situations for Mr. Godfrey Tearle: one in which, as the recusant monk, he made a thrilling avowal of love; the other when, in a speech ten minutes long, he gave an intensely emotional narration of his soul's agony as a priestly recluse aching for the companionship of woman. Mr. Godfrey Tearle, in those two magnificent scenes, established himself as one of our leading actors.



Second thoughts on "The Garden of Allah" at Drury Lane persisted in one direction. After all, flesh and blood's the thing. Away with the canvas and props, the cackle and the camels—it is the man, or the woman, that matters! The man who mattered in the Druriodrama was Mr. Godfrey Tearle. The young actor had the chance of his life—and he seized it.

How he seized it! It has been said, with absolute correctness, that the house rose at him. I beheld the unimaginable spectacle of a critic applauding with both his hands for minutes on end. In the pit and circles, people leaped to their feet and shouted for "Tearle! Tearle! Tearle!"

Who is this fellow Tearle?

He is the actor who went to America recently and promptly returned because, I understand, they couldn't stick him, or couldn't understand him. So much the worse for America and so much the better for Yurru. Experience, like murder, will out. Godfrey Tearle was nursed on rose pink and cradled in properties. You would hardly think, to look at him—the personification of the *jeune premier*—that he has been acting, acting, acting for twenty-eight years—acting everything, from Shakespeare (Brutus at seventeen!) to the musical glasses.

His great-great-grandfather was a Covent Garden Hamlet. His father, Osmond Tearle, played the great men of Shakespeare splendidly. Many years ago I stood by Osmond Tearle's grave in a Northern churchyard and there bethought me of his young son Godfrey. While the enraptured Drury-lanians were clamouring for "Tearle! Tearle! Tearle!" I had to "go behind"—I could not resist the impulse—to tell the fine young actor what I thought of him.

I found him in Henry Irving's dressing-room. Godfrey Tearle had "arrived."

BERNARD SHAW'S FREAK PLAY.

A freak play by Mr. Bernard Shaw, called "Heartbreak House," was pluckily produced by Mr. J. Bernard Fagan at the Court Theatre. Its performance lasted a few minutes short of four mortal hours—but it seemed like years—during which period an excessively intelligent audience was by turns tantalised, obfuscated, flabbergasted, and amused.

The orgy of stage spectacle in "Cairo" was as nothing compared with the orgy of chinwagging in "Heart-

break House." Nothing happened until the final moments except talk, talk, talk.

Then a Zeppelin bomb was supposed to fall on the garrulous folk of the play. The bang in the theatre was horrific, but, according to Mr. Fagan in his after-curtain speech, it did not awaken the author.

"Mr. Shaw," said the manager, "is fast asleep in his box."

A few minutes prior to the merciful explosion, which happily obliterated two of the chatterers, the loudest laughter of the evening had been evoked by the following passage of dialogue :—

"How is all this going to end?"

"It won't end."

"Oh! (in agonised tones). It can't go on for ever!"

The play, however, was not a jocular test of the length to which the patience of a London audience would go. Its characters spoke far too earnestly for that.

They talked, talked, talked at the top of their voices on nearly every subject that is or has ever been under the sun, from Desdemona to drunkenness. The jibber-jabber was entertaining, not because the utterances were those of ordinary human beings, but because they were the voice of Shaw.

The Voice spoke of marriage by the ream, of capital and labour by the yard, of morality by the furlong. To what end, nobody in the audience professed to know, and very few of them cared. It was sufficient for the evening that they were entertained.

A patriarchal retired seaman with a long beard, in the principal role, looked like a mixture of Noah, Methuselah, the late General Booth, and Mr. Shaw himself. He declaimed against everything and everybody, and the louder he declaimed the more obscure his meaning became.

Another energetic person in the piece was a Gilbertian burglar, delightfully acted by Mr. Charles Groves. There were also three feminine philanderers (finely performed by Miss Ellen O'Malley, Miss Edith Evans, and Miss Mary Grey) whose purpose in the play seemed to be to make fools of the men-folk, one of whom repeatedly apostrophised the heavens, calling on them despairingly to fall on "Woman! Woman!"

There were many pearls of wisdom and gems of humour, strangely enough, in all this apparently incomprehensible farrago of Shavian parable as it appeared to be. Frequently

the desert of dialogue was lit up by a lightning flash of philosophy or mordant satire, or even agreeable sentiment. For example:—

“There is a point at which the only answer you can give a man who breaks all the rules is to knock him down.”

* * * * *

Derisive epithets like “Scatterbrain House!” and “Jaw-break House!” greeted Bernard Shaw in the newspaper Press the morning after the four-hours *première* of his “Heartbreak House.” Yet the play was alive and kicking—or, rather, chinwagging—when I revisited it a week later, and a crowded house was laughing and applauding. Judicious cutting and quickening had transformed the piece into an exhilarating entertainment.

The process of compression, however, had not made its meaning clearer. All that had happened was enhanced brilliance in an already scintillant representation—the epigrams more biting, the characterisation more sharply defined. The general obfuscation remained, as exasperating as ever. “What on earth does it mean?” was the question on every lip.

Professional critics were as bewildered as ordinary playgoers. I was curious to know whether any of them had read the Shavian riddle aright, so I asked Mr. Fagan, the manager, to show me his Press book. In that portly tome there were hundreds of notices of “Heartbreak House,” many of them lauding it to the skies; but not one of the writers, as far as I could see, had been able to give an intelligent idea of the play’s thematic intention. They were appreciative, or scornful, or denunciatory; they were knowing or they were undiscerning; not one of them was positively interpretative.

Thus we had the singular spectacle of a play which nobody professed to understand filling a theatre nightly, and imparting pleasurable sensations to one and all! Such is the genius of Bernard Shaw, a faculty possessed by only one other dramatist—Sir J. M. Barrie.

I do not pretend to be wiser than the rest, but this is the reading of the riddle according to my lights.

“Heartbreak House” is two plays in one. One is a surface play of wit and puppetry; the other is a parable. It is the surface play that the average auditor enjoys. He is amused by its verbal pyrotechnics, the characters’ foibles

and vagaries, the comical unexpectedness of their actions. He is dazzled by the executent audacity of the literary virtuoso, Bernard Shaw.

Now for the parable.

“Heartbreak House” is Europe before and during the war. A poster issued by the Court Theatre depicted a house upside down, with a jumble of hearts falling out of a window. It symbolised Europe distracted unto tears.

The people in “Heartbreak House” immediately before and during the war were all more or less distraught. Their lunacy was so far from being realised by themselves that the only sane person among them appeared to be the maddest of all.

That individual, the patriarchal Captain Shotover, personifies the philosophy of George Bernard Shaw. Shotover, like Shaw, rails at Heartbreak House, indicting its idle rich and its cultured classes for their useless, unscientific lives. Shotover, or Shaw, is the Undefeated Spirit. But, as he says, he must hurry. He is old. He has no time to waste in talk. “I will discover,” he exclaims, “a ray mightier than any X-ray; a mind ray that will explode in the belt of my adversary before he can point his gun at me.”

In a word: Pacifism, or peaceful persuasion.

THE “ORGY” AT HIS MAJESTY’S.

His Majesty’s Theatre, handsomely redecorated and re-upholstered, was re-opened with another Oriental spectacular play in the manner of its phenomenally successful predecessor, “Chu Chin Chow.”

This remarkable entertainment, “Cairo,” was described by its author, Mr. Oscar Asche as a mosaic in music and mime. It is really a musical costume melodrama tinged with fantasy and farce,—a wonderful piece of pageantry, glowing with colour, kaleidoscopic in movement, sensuous, passionate, abandoned, throbbing with life. As a picture—in its appeal to the eye and the senses—“Cairo” clinches Mr. Asche’s reputation as one of out ablest producers and stage-managers.

All the thirteen scenes were astonishing, and one of them was sensational.

It was a Bacchanalian orgy in an old Egyptian palace. A villainous Oriental prince, Nur al-Din, sat enthroned in an

old Egyptian palace, "where, perchance," said Nur al-Din, "Cleopatra and her countless lovers, ages ago, did carouse, disport, and sin."

A flood of moonlight swamped the flaming braziers in the ruined palace, which was partly open to the sky. A cataract of humanity—half-naked, dishevelled, laughing, singing, shouting, dancing, and leaping—poured down a wide flight of stairs into the circular foreground by the prince's throne. Furies in tossing manes of red and green hair led the frenzied throng.

Music crashed and blared. Women were raised on strong men's shoulders, and, borne aloft in abandoned attitudes, were sensuously kissed by other men. Sirens flung themselves bodily at the prince and rapturously embraced him.

The curtain fell on the orgy at its height. When it rose again the audience gasped. Only Gustave Doré (or Oscar Asche) could have imagined the startling tableau, and only Oscar Asche could have put it into living picture form.

The entire assemblage of Bacchanalians, numbering several hundreds, had collapsed from sheer exhaustion. Their still recumbent forms littered the floor and staircase, the sexes intermingled, a human débris, massed, conglomerate, their white limbs gleaming in the moonlight and the torches' glow.

The audience rose at the spectacle. There may be more than one opinion about its intention, but none can deny its artistry. The festival of Saturn in ancient Rome could not have been more ravishing to the eye.

That was but one of thirteen scenes in "Cairo" which, for spectacular wonderment, have possibly never been equalled on the English stage. The artists Joseph and Phil Harker and the costume designer, Mr. Percy Anderson, excelled themselves in the architectural and landscape splendours of the Gates of Cairo, the gardens of the Sultan's palace, the pilgrims' encampment by the Nile amid palm trees and pyramids, the stately columned ruins of the Mosque of Askebar, and the slave market with great red dhows at the quay.

Mr. Asche was Ali Shar, an itinerant showman—a burly wrestler, displaying large portions of his flesh (exceedingly uncomfortable to the view).

The acting was purely melodramatic, in consonance with

the theme, and therefore of comparatively little account. Miss Lily Brayton spoke the rhymed verse superbly, and looked magnificent in the rich and flowing robes of a vengeful princess. Mr. Courtice Pounds, as a clown in a bright red wig, sang a number of indifferent songs agreeably. Mr. Shayle Gardner's majestic Sultan, Miss Fedora Rozelli's singing heroine and Mr. Cecil Humphrey's Machiavellian prince were vigorous performances; and the audience were properly enthusiastic over the excellent comedy-drama supplied by Mr. Frank Cochrane and Miss Gracie Leigh as a "welly poor old Chinaman" and his "mis'able, dishon'ble wife."

The music to "Cairo," by Mr. Percy Fletcher, forms an important part of the production. It is more pretentious than "Chu Chin Chow's," and not nearly as catchy. The reception was more than cordial, and a special round of applause greeted Mr. Asche's statement that the production is all-British.

AT THE GRAND GUIGNOL.

"Horrible," "brutal," "bestial," were a few of the epithets I heard applied to the Grand Guignol shocker—"The Old Women"—after the first-night performance at the Little Theatre.

Nobody seemed to have enjoyed the piece. I saw about half-a-dozen people leave the theatre while it was being played. The only encomium that reached my ears was an appreciation of the acting, with which I heartily concurred.

The acting made the production palatable to the connoisseurs. Non-expert observers, however, are necessarily incapable of appreciating the niceties of technique, and are all the more susceptible to its emotional effects.

MURDER IN A MADHOUSE.

As, therefore, the average playgoer is not a cold expert, I doubt whether the public production of a play like "The Old Women" can be justified.

No one who had not seen this piece could imagine how brutal it was. The scene was a ward in a lunatic asylum. A pretty girl who had just recovered her sanity (Sybil Thorndike), pleaded with the doctors and nurses not to be left alone with two horrible women maniacs, her fellow inmates of the ward.

GOUGED HER EYES OUT.

The dreadful creatures had plotted with a vampire in another ward to murder the girl. Their victim "sensed" the danger, and gave way to an ecstasy of fear.

No actress can portray fear like Miss Sybil Thorndike. Every nerve in the girl's body seemed to twitch. Her mental and physical agony was terrible to see.

When the three murderesses flung the girl on the bed and the vampire gouged out her eyes with a knitting needle, even strong men were sickened. It was too much for the stoutest nerves.

ASLEEP FOR SEVEN YEARS.

The French author of "The Old Women," André de Lorde, applied his gift for sensationalism to better purpose in a two-act-drama called "The Vigil." This was a poignant study in pity, with the principal characters finely performed by Mr. George Bealby and Miss Sybil Thorndike. Miss Thorndike was a woman who had been in a trance for seven years. She lay like a corpse on a bed, her ashen features in profile to the audience. During her long sleep, her two young sons had died. The husband (Mr. Bealby) sat beside the bed, prematurely aged, half-distraught. He talked incessantly to the sleeper, as though she could hear him. When the sleeper awoke, the scene, so sensitively acted by Mr. Bealby and Miss Thorndike, was almost unbearably pathetic.

By a mischance, the woman heard of the death of her sons. "I will not live!" she exclaimed. Again she slept—this time to wake no more.

TERROR ON THE SEA.

The opening playlet, "Latitude 15° S." was the weakest of the five, but it had its good points.

A storm-tossed ship was staged with fairly realistic sea effects. The superstitious seamen were scared by the sound of a distant bell. A religious fanatic worked on their emotions, and was duly cursed by the mate.

One trembling seaman, Joe (Russell Thorndike), half repented of his sins. Joe had a line that thrilled me, "There was that girl in Sunderland. . . ."

Like his sister, Sybil, Mr. Russell Thorndike is an adept in the delineation of mental perturbation, especially of the anguish of remorse.

The mystery of the bell was solved as the curtain fell. It was not the Flying Dutchman's death-knell, after all. The look-out sang out to the captain, "It's only a bell buoy, sir, all the way from London Town."

HER LOVER'S MISTRESS.

In "Rounding the Triangle," Miss Thorndike had a capital comedy part as a fiancée who came face to face with her lover's mistress and actually suggested that, as he was incapable of loving one woman alone, he should possess them both! The situation had obvious possibilities for satirical dialogue.

Miss Thorndike rattled off her clever ironic speeches with contagious gusto. She had a passage of arms with the mistress which raised a shout of laughter.

"I won't be talked to as though I were an animal," the mistress exclaimed.

"But you are," the fiancée retorted. "We are all. But you chose to be a professional animal."

WHEN THE PIE WAS OPENED.

In "Shepherd's Pie," by Sewell Collins, there was a delicious character sketch by Stockwell Hawkins of a vulgar employé in a sloppy dress suit (with red handkerchief tucked in the waistcoat), entertaining his employer to dinner with a view to promotion.

The joke of the thing lay in the ingredients of a supposedly home-made shepherd's pie. It was really a German pie. Another guest of the evening, a Frenchman, had lost an arm in the war. A finger-ring was discovered in the pie. The Frenchman recognised it as his. Tableau!

The play, like the pie, had "a certain subtle flavour," not altogether acceptable, but undeniably comic, like all Sewell Collins' work.

I have devoted more space than I intended to the Grand Guignol, but there is no denying the consummate artistry of these sensational productions at the Little Theatre.

MASTERPIECE BY MAETERLINCK.

Maeterlinck, the "Belgian Shakespeare," is engaged in the composition of a trilogy of fairy plays embodying his philosophy of Life and Death. That was the fact of literary

significance which the production of his play, "The Betrothal"—a work of supreme ability and beauty—revealed at the Gaiety Theatre.

The Maeterlinckian philosophy is being expounded in the dreams of the woodcutter's children, Mytyl, the girl, and Tyltyl, the boy. Mytyl merely flitted across the scene in "The Betrothal." "Her hour has not struck," said Fairy Berylune. "When it does, I shall be quite capable of finding her."

In the first of the three dream-plays, "The Blue Bird," Mytyl and Tyltyl went hand-in-hand on a journey through Fairyland in search of Happiness, typified by the blue bird. They found Happiness, but only for a moment, for the blue bird flew away as the curtain fell.

In the second play, "The Betrothal," Tyltyl dreamed that he went on another search for Happiness. Fairy Berylune, before she waved her magic wand, told him that he would never be truly happy until he discovered his only mate. He found her, and plighted his troth to her, and her name was Joy.

"What does it mean?"

That is the insistent query of all beholders in viewing these so-called fairy plays. Master producers like Granville Barker may trick them out as they may with enchantingly lovely effects of scenery and costume, but the imageries and the symbolisms persist. The villain of the piece at the Gaiety was Destiny, a giant character crackling whys and wherefores from all his stupendous joints. You may interpret this Destiny in a dozen ways, and every way may be wrong.

Similarly with the veiled mystery of the play, that stalking interrogation called Joy (Miss Gladys Cooper). If any intrepid parents desire to be harassed by a thousand Whys, they should take their children to see this astonishing conception of Joy.

Joy, during two-thirds of the play, is a speechless ghost, tightly swathed in white cerements—a mummy half alive. When her veil is removed she has no face. She is the adult ghost of that little sweetheart to whom Tyltyl gave the blue bird years ago. She follows him through Fairyland, hauntingly, in the wake of six girls of the village, among whom he expects to find his one true love.

The face of Joy, in all its radiant beauty, will never be seen

unless Tyltyl recalls to memory his little sweetheart. That wondrous unveiling is the heart of this lovely allegory. It occurs in the scene called the Abode of the Children, peopled by little winged elves in blue. There Tyltyl meets his own children-to-be, and it is The Smallest of Them All (witchingly played by Miss Gabrielle Casartelli) who gently removes her future mother's veil and leads Tyltyl to the consummation of his quest for the golden girl, whose name is Joy.

The production of the play was Grossmith and Laurillard's masterpiece, and the Swan Song of that celebrated partnership. As a piece of stagecraft it was a work of art. Scenery, costumes, performance, musical accompaniment, all were superlatively good.

Mr. Bobbie Andrews was a perfect Tyltyl. Mr. William Farren gave a splendidly dramatic study of a miser grovelling among his gold, like Gaspard in "*Les Cloches*." Miss Cooper's Joy, Miss Winifred Emery's Fairy Berylune, Mr. Ivan Berlyns's Destiny, Miss Stella Campbell's Light—each was completely satisfying.

The audience demonstrated for a quarter of an hour on the fall of the curtain. Miss Cooper made two speeches, but the genius of the production, Mr. Granville Barker, could not be found.

MELODRAMA AS A FINE ART.

"A thick-ear play" was Sir Gerald du Maurier's description of "Bull-dog Drummond" in his after-curtain speech at Wyndham's Theatre. The label was a funny one, but it did less than justice to "Sapper's" exciting and amusing drama, which may prove to be another "Raffles."

The production was really a sublimated melodrama—the genuine article, melodic accompaniment and all. It was melodrama as a fine art—presented with the polished artistry for which Wyndham's Theatre is famous.

Sir Gerald du Maurier, as the redoubtable Captain Hugh Drummond, was the concentrated essence of all the Adelphi, Lyceum and transpontine heroes from time immemorial. Drummond exhibited his bull-dog tenacity in a series of desperate conflicts with a gang of crooks and forgers operating from a bogus nursing home in the country. He was a demobilised officer who inserted an agony advertisement asking for adventure and excitement.

The advertisement was answered by Phyllis Benton, whose uncle was an unwilling confederate of the gang. Drummond and his officer friends, Algy and Peter, went into the fray like a modern Three Musketeers—and they made the rafters of that bogus nursing home ring.

It rang with pistol shots galore. Motor-cars sped to and fro with rescuers and rescued, and with disguises and masqueraders. Drummond would be gagged and bound one minute, and the next he would be freed by the heroine (pretending to be unconscious), and turning the tables on his captors.

A door opened and shut on heroes and villain at the turn of an electric switch. People were drugged and tortured by a medical fiend, whom Drummond eventually throttled, after a duel of unparalleled ferocity, fought with pistols and knives and bottles.

The thrill of combat was relieved by a current of delightfully inconsequential humour. The thing remained a joke to the end. When Drummond had the master-villain apparently in the toils, the Scotland-yard men who arrested him turned out to be his confederates! His last words, "Au revoir" suggested a sequel-play; and "Bull-dog Drummond" should certainly "be continued."

Sir Gerald du Maurier's resounding success was shared by many members of his company, especially by Miss Brooke as the heroine, and by Mr. Gilbert Hare and Mr. Alfred Drayton as the two gorgeous villains.

A PLAY OF THE CENTURY.

When a theatrical John Lubbock comes to compile a list of the Hundred Best Plays of the Twentieth Century the title "Milestones" will leap to his pen.

That splendid comedy by Arnold Bennett and Edward Knoblock had not aged in the least since its original production at the Royalty when it was revived recently at the same theatre.

The reason is plain. "Milestones" was built by Bennett and Knoblock on the secure foundations of sincerity and truth. Its motives arise from the wellspring of instinctive humanity. That is why its pathos is so poignant, its humour so sure of a ready response.

The charming story of three ages of mankind—set in the

periods 1860, 1885, and 1912, and illustrated by the vogues of crinolines, bustles, and panniers—won its usual meed of laughter, tears, and applause. Mr. Dennis Eadie repeated his artistic performance of the shipping magnate, young, middle-aged, and old, and Miss Haidée Wright renewed her former triumph as the pathetic spinster.

The Royalty revival proved the truth of the adage that “a milestone does not become covered with moss.”

THE STAGE SOCIETY SHOCKED !

A play has at last been produced—which, incredible as it may appear—has shocked and disgusted even the Stage Society, an institution inured to blushing drama which cannot be performed publicly. At the society's first representation of H. O. Meredith's new tragedy, “Forerunners,” at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, the audience almost hissed the piece off the stage.

Portents of the sibilant fiasco followed the fall of the curtain on the second of the three scenes. After the third the boos and hisses were so determined that the players hovered in the wings, hesitating to face the storm.

The play deserved its fate. It was like an unconsciously humorous prehistoric peep, with ancient Britons belabouring their womenfolk until they were “quite dead” (the author's own words), and with dialogue phrased so brutally that its only purpose seemed to be to flout decorum. One of the lines, spoken by a woman, “I would tear out his eyes with my brooch on our wedding couch,” is a specimen of the language employed.

HENRY JAMES AS DRAMATIST.

The late novelist, Henry James, a master of intricate and often iridescent English, had a praiseworthy ambition to be a playwright. Several attempts which he made to capture a sense of the theatre fell short of expectations, although they had the advantage of production at leading West End theatres, such as His Majesty's and the St. James'. The Stage Society unearthed an old play of his, “The Reprobrate,” and presented it, with no better result, at the Court Theatre.

James had a passion for long and difficult sentences. One of his books, “Notes of a Son and a Brother,” contains a

single sentence of 160 words. That would never do for the theatre, so James set himself sternly in "The Reprobrate" to repress the exuberance of his verbosity. He succeeded—for about half-an-hour of the performance. The opening passages were positively monosyllabic. Then alas! his pen began to run away with him, and within the next half-hour or so he caused a character (for example) to reply to a proposal of marriage: "Isn't your proposal rather rashly precipitate?"

He freely indulged, too, in lengthy soliloquies, barefaced asides, and cumbrous metaphors—all vices of technique in the modern theatre. The pick of the metaphors went like this: "You go spinning along the road to virtue, and if you look back, what do you see? . . . All of 'em sitting down, partaking of refreshment." Clever chatter of this description deserved and obtained the tribute of an occasional laugh, but, on the whole, "The Reprobrate" was the least amusing "comedy" that the West End stage has groaned under for years. It was exceedingly well performed by a company chiefly composed of young actors and actresses, whose earnest devotion to their art might have been applied to more practical purposes.

FINE FIRST PLAY BY A WOMAN.

A first play by a new dramatist won a sensational success at the St. Martin's Theatre. The audience was transported with enthusiasm when the curtain fell on "A Bill of Divorcement," by Clemence Dane. The author's call was the most vociferous that has been heard for years.

This unusual ebullition of feeling was fully warranted by the play. It was a piece of sound workmanship on a plane of high and thoughtful drama. For a first effort its technical quality was altogether remarkable. It had no irritating defects of improbability or of strained expression. There was nothing morbid in the treatment, although it dealt with insanity. The tragic motive was lightened by easy humour and lightning flashes of wit.

Divorce, insanity, heredity, eugenics—these would appear to be more suitable matters for discussion on the platform than the stage.

The brilliant author ranged herself entirely on the side of the majority report of the Royal Commission on Divorce, which proposed that the grounds for divorce in this country

should be extended to include, among other causes for divorce:—

“Incurable insanity after five years’ confinement.

“Habitual drunkenness, found incurable after three years from a first order of separation.”

The workings of those two particular causes were vividly illustrated in the play, the action of which takes place on Christmas Day, 1932, after an Act of Divorce Reform has been passed in accordance with the recommendations of the Royal Commission. It was interesting to note, in passing, that the scheme of the play’s construction carefully observed the dramatic unities of time and place.

Margaret Fairfield (Miss Lilian Braithwaite) was enabled by the Act to divorce her husband, who went mad from shell-shock in the war, and had been sixteen years in an asylum. Margaret was to marry a lover (Mr. C. Aubrey Smith) in a week’s time. The husband suddenly recovered his sanity, escaped from the asylum, returned home, and found the woman he adored no longer his wife and waiting to be taken away by another man.

The conflict of emotion between the three contending parties was terrible to witness—a consequence largely of magnificent straight-from-the-shoulder acting. Mr. Malcolm Keen, as the husband, was extraordinarily fine. His scene of passionate entreaty to the distracted woman touched a heartrending note of compassion. Miss Braithwaite also rose splendidly to the occasion.

What did the woman do?

She was torn between the husband and the lover. At first she elected to do what she deemed to be her duty, but in the end the call of her true mate conquered all. So we came back to the old wisdom of the scapegoat: “It is expedient that one man should die for the people.”

A subsidiary interest—the position in these difficult circumstances of the divorced couple’s daughter—enabled Miss Meggie Albanesi to give a memorable display of mingled humour and pathos, allied to the witchery of vivacity and girlish charm.

A PLAY OF THE SEASON.

The lesson of the great war is “to do the thing you can’t explain because you know it’s right.” Mr. Godfrey Tearle

spoke those words when, as ex-Lieut.-Colonel Waverley Ango, he did the thing he knew was right in Monckton Hoffe's beautiful play, "The Faithful Heart."

There is a winning tenderness, a simple humanity, and homely humour in "the Faithful Heart" that would conquer a curmudgeon. If that were not enough, the conquest would be completed by Mr. Godfrey Tearle's exceptionally fine performance and by the genius of the producer, Mr. Leon M. Lion.

Manly feeling and an almost womanly sympathy were exquisitely blended in Mr. Tearle's acting of this sailor who loved a lass; loved her sailor-like—not too well.

Waverley Ango, in the Prologue dated 1899, plighted his troth in the funny little parlour of the Reindeer Hotel, outside Southampton docks. Then, as fourth officer in a Union liner, he sailed away and forgot the dark-haired lass called "Blacky."

Twenty years after, in the great war, the forgetful sailor-man was Lieut.-Colonel Ango, working in an hotel converted by the War Department. A successful soldier, he trod the primrose path—engaged to an heiress and promised a lucrative Staff appointment.

His dreams were rudely dispelled. A little girl who had seen his portrait in the newspaper recognised him as her long-lost father. She called on the famous colonel. Her Christian name was Blacky.

The meeting between father and daughter was most touchingly played by Mr. Tearle and Miss Mary Odette, whose Blacky II., as she is styled in the programme, marked the actress as an incomparable delineator of the wistful ingénue type of part.

The ensuing conflict of emotions in Waverley Ango's breast turned on the necessity of rejecting either the dictates of paternal affection or the allurements of affluence and love. It had to be Diana, his fiancée, or Blacky II.

He chose Blacky II. "He could not explain it, but he knew it was right."

So the Epilogue took us back to the funny little room at the docks. There—assuredly in the presence of the spirit of Blacky I.—Waverley Ango and Blacky II. heard again, and answered, the ship's syren calling him to sea, and sensed again "the old, old smell of the oil and the dirty paint."

The fun in "The Faithful Heart" is as jolly as its sentiment is appealing. It is one of the very best plays of the season 1921-22.

HAWTREY AS A PIRATE.

Can you imagine the placid, imperturbable Sir Charles Hawtrey as a rampageous pirate, out-captaining Captain Hook?

A super-pirate, revelling in the thought of scuppers running red with blood? A pirate in a pig-tail and a red waistband sagging with knives and pistols? A pirate singing, "Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum," threatening a crew of mutineers that he will slit 'em from ear to ear, and lustily exclaiming, "Boy, get me a bottle of rum, blast ye"?

You cannot? The thing seems unimaginable? Very well, then, hie you to "Ambrose Applejohn's Adventure," at the Criterion Theatre, where, at the time of writing, the play is enjoying a run.

Mr. Hawtrey is at his very best in Walter Hackett's new comedy. He has never played with more vivacity, and rarely with greater effect. Now that the burlesque episode has been speeded up, he is a "regular scream."

As Ambrose Applejohn, Hawtrey exercised his piratical proclivities in a dream. Two gangs of crooks were besieging Ambrose's ancestral mansion. They sought a parchment which located the treasure hidden on the premises of Ambrose's notorious ancestor, Captain Applejack the pirate. While the house was being raided, Ambrose fell asleep.

He appeared in Act II., in his dream, as Captain Applejack, reincarnated. The crooks with whom he held converse in Act I. were mutineers, defying him. A feminine crook (alluringly played by Miss Hilda Moore) appeared as a captive aboard ship, and the truculent "Applejack" had her flung at his feet. "Boy," quoth he, "tell them to bring hither the Portuguese woman I captured in the brigantine. I am in a mood for dalliance."

To hear Hawtrey deriding the mutineers as "Scum!" —to see him calmly cutting throats and wiping the knife on his coat-tail, and demanding of the others: "Where is the next fool that wants to follow him to hell? . . . So perish all who cross my path!" —to hear and see such things was equivalent to receiving a gift of rare and refreshing fruit in the midst of unparalleled drought.

A "FOOTBALL" PLAY!

Football has yet to be made the subject of a popularly successful play in this country. Harold Brighouse's comedy, "The Game," which I saw at the King's, Hammersmith, did not do justice to it, either dramatically or pictorially.

"The Game," as viewed by a devotee of professional League football, was full of far-fetched ideas, such as the following :—

A director of a First Division club in danger of relegation transfers his crack centre-forward, the best in England, to the club which he has to meet in a decisive match.

Before the match, he vainly endeavours to corrupt the centre-forward, who insinuates that the referee has been bribed.

During the fateful match, the director is in his office instead of in the grand stand watching the game, although he believes that defeat will ruin him financially.

The transferred centre-forward is allowed by his trainer to return to the field with a broken arm in a sling, although the club doctor describes the game as a rough one. His side was losing when he returns, but his wonderful play (with a broken arm) turns defeat into victory.

I ask you !!!

The roar and excitement of the professional football field can only be suggested in a play of spectacular proportions, such as an autumn drama at the "Lane." An attempt to reproduce them by means of a gramophone was another ludicrous feature of the Brighouse play.

THE DIVINE SARAH.

Only an artist of indisputable genius could have roused an audience as Mme. Sarah Bernhardt did at the Princes Theatre.

The demonstration when the curtain rose on the actress at the beginning of the third act of "Daniel" was exceptionally impressive, but it paled into insignificance compared with the ovation she received when the curtain fell. The first outburst was a tribute to the woman. The second bore testimony to her art—magnetic still, although her years have passed the allotted span.

A rumble of eager applause accompanied the three thumps with the baton—*les trois coups*—before the act began. The

audience had seen two-thirds of the play, and were worked up to a pitch of expectant intensity.

Then Daniel Arnault appeared—the unhappy lover, dying of a broken heart. He was a young man seated in a high-backed chair, wearing a plum-coloured dressing-gown, a rug over his knees, his feet resting on a crimson footstool. His complexion was a deathly pallor; there were black rims to his sunken eyes, and at intervals he coughed distressingly.

The actress stood erect to acknowledge her wonderful reception, then plunged into the passion of the scene, the crux of which revealed Daniel to his brother Albert as the self-accused lover of his wife—a false confession to save the wife and the real lover from the brother's vengeance.

Mme. Bernhardt, despite her physical limitations, aggravated by a cold, performed the scene heroically. Her incomparable voice was fully equal to its great emotional demands, and the play of her expressive features and hands was no less remarkable than her vocal tones.

There was a ring in the applause and cheering at the end of the act—and even more so on the conclusion of the play—which was completely absent from the initial reception. It swelled, gradually, into a mighty roar, as the curtain rose and fell a dozen times.

Daniel died on the stage in the last act—a different dénouement from that of the English version at the St. James's. It was not an agonised death, but a quietly pathetic fading away during the reading of a letter from the wife, informing him that she had found happiness with her lover. Again the great actress had the audience, as the saying is, in the hollow of her hand.

This time the enthusiasm knew no bounds. The cheering went on and on. Mr. Cochran's secretary, on the flower-laden stage, announced that madame had retired to her dressing-room exhausted. "Then what about the company?" exclaimed a galleryite; whereupon the members of the company were loudly applauded, as they fully deserved.

A red-letter night in the theatre!

WELLS AND ST. JOHN ERVINE.

The wonderful visitor in Mr. H. G. Wells' and Mr. St. John Ervine's play, "The Wonderful Visit," was an angel.

He was a young man angel, who came in an inquisitorial

mood. His advent occurred, however, only in a dream—a phantasmagorian vision conjured in the sleep of a country vicar nodding in his garden.

The resultant dream-play was an odd mixture of "Pygmalion and Galatea" and "The Servant in the House," seasoned with a touch of the farcical comedy, "Niobe." It began in laughter, drifted into melodrama, and ended on a note of the higher morality. It was everything by turns, and nothing strong.

The vicar had been soliloquising on the cruelty of mankind, who, as Ruskin said, would shoot an angel if one appeared in the sky.

No sooner soliloquised than done. The vicar dozed. Darkness fell on the scene. A bush of rhododendrons sparkled with fairy lights. Heavenly music played. The bush was rent asunder, and an angelic form appeared—a beautiful youth in a silvery tunic, winged and bare limbed.

In the vicar's study (Act II.) the parishioners guyed the angel. The vicar walked as in a dream, and the people he saw comported themselves with "antick dispositions," ludicrously reminiscent at times of Daisy Ashford's creations in "The Young Visiters." Lady Hammergallow (Miss Compton) raised many a laugh by remarking on such mundane matters as the angel's exiguous attire. The fun in this scene was the happiest part of the play. Many of the subsequent incidents consisted largely of tiresome moralisings in the manner of "If Christ came to Chicago."

They were relieved, however, by lovely scenic effects by the designer, George W. Harris. The effects were magical and supernatural. When the angel mounted a war memorial cross on a hilltop and appealed to heaven for guidance, the sky became strangely illuminated. There was also a charming apotheosis when the dream concluded with the angel departing in fire and flame.

The play had no profundity of thought, but it was spectacularly attractive, and the acting could hardly have been bettered except by a much-needed call for rehearsal. Its chief asset was Mr. J. H. Roberts' sympathetic performance as the vicar. Miss Compton's dry, deliberate humour was delightful, and Mr. Harold French played the difficult part of the angel as well as it could be played. The reception was cordial, but hardly enthusiastic.

A THRILLING MURDER PLAY.

Who shot the sneering, smiling villain ?

The situation devised by Mr. Channing Pollock in the shooting scene of his sensational play, "The Sign on the Door," is one of the most ingenious in the whole range of melodrama, and also one of the most deftly constructed. It held the audience at the Playhouse as in a vice, and won a furore of applause when the curtain fell.

The husband who shot the villain did not know that his own wife was in an adjoining bedroom. Having carefully removed his finger-prints and placed the revolver in the dead man's hand to suggest suicide, he affixed on the door a message which the dead man had written, "Do not disturb me." Then he turned the key and departed.

What a predicament for the wife, and how splendidly Miss Gladys Cooper rose to its emotional opportunities ! Her impulse was to protect her husband by assuming his guilt, so she dishevelled her hair, flung the room into disorder, took the pistol from the dead man's hand, fired two shots, and screamed in the telephone for help. When it arrived she shrieked, "I killed him. He attacked me. I killed him."

The man deserved his fate. Like Iago, he was a damned, smiling villain—an incorrigible, heartless betrayer—and there could be only one verdict when the skein had been unravelled—justifiable homicide.

It is not quite a perfect play. The wife, as wives are in melodrama, had been unnecessarily secretive throughout. Still, there was little to mar the technical brilliance of a gripping drama.

WRECK OF THE MAYFLOWER.

A stage mishap which might have had serious results occurred during the production of "The Mayflower ; a Play of the Pilgrim Fathers," at the Surrey Theatre.

The Mayflower, an enormous "property" vessel was about to sail for New England from the Barbican at Plymouth when she collapsed sideways and precipitated all her crew and passengers on the stage.

The crash was tremendous, and the audience held its breath in alarm as the curtain fell on a glimpse of the Pilgrim Fathers falling higgledy-piggledy, heels over head, towards the foot-lights.

No casualties were reported, but the scene was ruined. Laughter loud and long greeted the opening sentence of the next act : " God hath brought us safely across the ocean."

A single belated Pilgrim Father climbing on deck by a rope over the ship's side after the gangway had been removed was the cause of the " disaster." His weight upset the Mayflower's equilibrium, and over she went.

Unintentional humour dogged the production from start to finish.

The first Red Indian encountered by the Pilgrims in New England, one Squanto by name, opened fire with " Me been to London . . . me lived in Cornhill."

Another Red Indian, one Massassoit, comported himself in the manner of a music-hall comedian giving a burlesque imitation of the late Sir Herbert Tree. The audience again enjoyed a hearty laugh when Massassoit extended to the chief of the Pilgrim Fathers the invitation : " You . . . sleep . . . my bed . . . with me and my wife."

In spite of " The Mayflower's " profundity of piety, it was impossible to take it seriously. No pancake ever fell flatter than this play.

ART FROM A CELLAR.

The Bat Theatre of Moscow (the Chauve-Souris), which began in a cellar so noisome that a bat flew out when the door was opened, sent a fashionable West End audience into ecstasies of enjoyment at the London Pavilion. Its Grand Mogul, Mr. Nikita Balieff, may henceforward adopt the Caesarean slogan : " I came, I saw, I conquered."

Nikita Balieff was an entertainment in himself. He came before the curtain and introduced each item in excruciatingly funny broken English—a large man in a dress suit, with a great grey face, hawklike features, and an expression of supreme indifference—a take-it-or-leave-it look.

The " English " he knew had been learned in the last few days, but he solemnly promised that before the end of the season he would " speak better than your best poet, Shaks-pe-a-arr." In the circumstances, his little orations were surprisingly comprehensible, and even resourceful. For example, at the first of the many encores he declared that the management was always on the side of those who ask, " because that is the side that understands best." Another

happy interjection was, "The subject is very simple, but the music is more simpler than the subject." Nikita Balieff, a genius among stage craftsmen, is also what his sponsor, Mr. Cochran, would probably call a magnitudinous droll, for he is as much a master of grimace as Grimaldi, Grock, and Pelissier rolled in one.

The show itself was really sublimated vaudeville, but so artistically co-ordinated as to recall Pope's couplet :—

" Where order in variety we see,
And where, though all things differ, all agree."

Its effect, in the main, was humorous. There were frequent outbursts of laughter as well as continuous applause. The scenic settings were often jocularly futuristic. The costumes were a riot of colour and of pleasingly eccentric design. The music was always unpretentiously melodious, and the singing and dancing attained perfection of their kind.

It would be impossible briefly to indicate in detail the fifteen numbers on the programme. They included lovely living porcelains, ballads, choruses, and dances of various nations in exquisite scenic settings, and an assortment of highly ludicrous vocal burlesques.

The pick of the basket, perhaps, was a parade of wooden soldiers to the tune of the "Tin Soldiers' Parade." These whimsical warriors, in their stubby black boots, square-cut white trousers, blue tunics, tall shakos, and puffed-out spotted cheeks, glided to and fro to the tinkling march music, and raised a shriek of laughter when, like veritable toys, they suddenly swayed sideways and nearly toppled over.

The *Théâtre de la Chauve-Souris* brought a new thrill to London. It was Mr. Cochran's master-stroke.

LANG'S CHRISTOPHER SLY.

A practical joke in the Middle Ages was a deadly serious matter, judging by the specimen submitted by the Italian author, Giovacchino Forzano, in his play, "Christopher Sly."

Shakespeare's infallible sense of humour made rich comedy of the thing in the Induction to "The Taming of the Shrew." Signor Forzano, who publicly kissed Mr. Lang after the performance, turned the story into tragedy, for which treatment it is intrinsically unsuited.

Forzano's Sly (Mr. Matheson Lang) was not the Sly of

“The Shrew.” The drunken tinker was still a tinker, and still mightily bibulous, but he was also a pedlar of poems—an Anglicised Villon in a ragged cloak and purple hose. Recall Tree’s Gringoire, and, visually, you have him.

In the tavern scene of Act I. Sly drank a whole bottle of canary sack in six seconds. The nobleman who witnessed the feat had the insensible tinker-poet carried to his castle, and in Act II. subjected him to the mockery of a cruel illusion.

When Sly recovered from his drunken slumber he found himself on a canopied crimson bed, apparellled like a prince, and made obeisance to by lords and ladies. They duped him into the belief that he was in very truth a prince.

The nobleman’s light o’ love pretended to be his wife, and he sallied forth to the great hall of the castle, and was there enthroned in the habiliments of the Most Noble Order of the Garter—the belt, the mantle, the collar, the coronet, the golden gloves.

Then, oh ! the awakening ! Sly, cast ignominiously into a wine-cellar, soliloquised for fifteen minutes over his dreadful disillusionment. Unkindest cut of all, the light o’ love came to comfort him too late. Sly, having severed an artery, was going to a world where, it is to be hoped, there are no mediæval practical “jokes.”

The play was full of colour and rhapsody and a kind of wistful fun. Mr. Lang made a picturesque figure of Sly, and his air of puzzled (and fuddled) incredulity in the bedchamber scene was most humorously assumed. The thirty-five other characters in the piece were all excellently portrayed, and the reception made the rafters ring.

DRAMA OF CALVARY.

Mr. Temple Thurston’s defiance of the dramatic unities of time and place in “The Wandering Jew” produced an effect of scrappiness. The absence of sequential interest could surely have been relieved to a considerable extent by a closer adherence to unity of type in the Jew’s character and appearance. He should have been Mattathias of Jerusalem all along—not a series of men in different garbs and actuated by varying motives. He should have been, moreover, an undying Jew to the end. The whole value of the legend was bound up in that idea.

Mattathias, who spat on Christ at Calvary, should have renewed his wanderings when the curtain fell. Having lived sixteen hundred years for the Coming, he should still have been awaiting it in A.D. 1920. Instead, Mr. Thurston cheaply despatched him at a stake of the Inquisition, in a flood of ethereal limelight *à la* "The Sign of the Cross." That melodramatic apotheosis did not accord with the curse at Calvary : "Thou shalt wait for Me until I come again."

According to the author, the theme of the play was the purification of a soul by centuries of suffering. "What is His purpose with me," exclaimed the Jew, "ever thus to turn the joys of life to ashes?" The process of purification was insufficiently denoted in the play. Where it was apparent, in dialogue or action, the incidents did not clearly elucidate the subject, which is a great one, and should be greatly realised. There was no spirit of largeness in the more or less erotic adventures in which the Jew was engaged at widely separated periods of time in Palestine, Sicily, and Spain. The story's nobility of purpose was only momentarily attained—in the scene before the Cross of the Inquisition, where the Jew gave a grand enunciation of his heresy, "It would go hard with Christ to know His own if He should come again."

Mr. Matheson Lang, within those limitations, made an impressive figure of the Wandering Jew. The trouble with the character is that, because of the nature of the offence, it could not be sympathetically performed. Mr. Thurston, however, could have endowed it with pitifulness and wistfulness. Given the opportunity, an actor of Mr. Matheson Lang's compelling charm would have wrung our hearts while watching, during a thousand years, "the petty pageant of his little hopes pass by." Failing such opportunities, Mr. Lang was still wonderfully attractive in the part. His deportment was magnificent, and in his splendid voice there really was a suggestion of the author's phrase, "a note of things eternal."

"WHO WILL FORGIVE GOD?"

An astounding question, "Who is going to forgive God?" electrified a first-night audience at the Aldwych Theatre. It was a cry uttered by a bereaved mother in Mr. W. Somerset Maugham's war play, "The Unknown." The thrill it im-

parted had not been paralleled since the Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith flung the Bible in the fire.

Was it blasphemy?"

It did not appear to be so in the circumstances, but earnest Christians would probably resent Mr. Somerset Maugham's advertisement of the war's aftermath of unbelief. They would reprove him, perhaps, out of his own mouth. "It seems a pity," said a character in the play, "that you didn't hold your tongue. It is so easy to raise doubts; so hard to allay them."

Mrs. Littlewood, in "The Unknown," could forgive God when He took her first soldier son. She was a pious woman, and she said "Thy will be done." She could not forgive Him when He took her second and last son. She remained unforgiving (and here was the danger of Mr. Maugham's play) until and after the final curtain. Mr. Maugham's responsibility towards the Christian faith did not finish there. He also made his soldier hero—a believer before the war, an unbeliever afterwards—atheistic to the end.

The death of Mrs. Littlewood's second son left the mother stunned, callous, scornful of sympathy. Life became an unreal spectacle, in which nothing mattered. She wore no mourning, frequented the theatres, gave card parties. While she was playing cards the local vicar remarked, "Who should know better than the ministers of God that to err is human, to forgive divine?" The mother dropped her cards, sprang to her feet and exclaimed, brokenly, "And who is going to forgive God?

"Why did God take my second? He was the only comfort of my old age, my only joy. I haven't deserved that. I've been cheated. You say that God will forgive us our sins; but who is going to forgive God? Not I. Never! Never!" In a height of frenzy she rushed out of the house, and there was silence in the room.

The soldier hero returned from the war embittered against his Maker. War was "a dreary, muddy, dirty, stinking, bloody business." When his dearest friend was killed it was the last straw. He no longer believed in God's existence. "All that's moral in my soul," he said, "revolts at the thought of a God Who can permit the monstrous iniquity of war. I can't believe that there is a God in heaven."

His fiancée, to whom he had been engaged for seven

years, returned his engagement ring, and he threw it in the fire.

His father, the old colonel, was on his death-bed. The doctor had warned him of his approaching end. His Christianity momentarily failed him. He was afraid to die. The act-drop fell on his agony at the threshold of the Unknown—a scene superbly played by Mr. Charles V. France. But his fear of death deserted him on the administration of the Holy Sacrament.

Fortunately for the dramatist, the last word was with the doctor—and what a wonderful summing up it was! The doctor's creed in "The Unknown" is one of the loveliest speeches ever delivered on the stage. It amounted to this, God is not all-powerful. He has his age-long struggle with evil. All of us, even the meanest, can help Him. Our goodness adds to His strength. "When we're good we're buying silver bullets for the King of Heaven. When we're bad we're trading with the enemy."*

Dramatically, aside from controversy, "The Unknown," was a thoughtful, powerful play. Occasionally it was terrifying. The mental situation of the bereaved mother was alarming, and the intensity of the actress, Miss Haidee Wright, struck a chill to the soul. Excellent performances were also given by Lady Tree (the colonel's widow), Mr. Basil Rathbone (the soldier agnostic), Mr. H. R. Hignett (the parson) and Mr. Clarence Blakiston (the doctor).

The play's reception was peculiar. It held the audience grippingly until the end of Act II., when Miss Wright had a great ovation, but the unhappy ending proved a disappointment, and the curtain fell with no call for the author.

* * * * *

* The full text of this remarkable sermon from the stage is as follows:—
I want to tell you how I found peace.

My explanation is as old as the hills, and I believe many perfectly virtuous persons have been frizzled alive for accepting it. Our good vicar would say I was a heretic. I can't help it. I can't see any other way of reconciling the goodness of God with the existence of evil.

I don't believe that God is all-powerful and all-knowing. I think He struggles against evil as we do.

I don't believe He means to chasten us by suffering or to purify us by pain. I believe pain and suffering are evil, and that He hates them, and would crush them if He could.

I believe that in this age-long struggle between God and evil, we can help, all of us, even the meanest; for in some ways, I don't know how, I believe that all our goodness adds to the strength of God, and perhaps, who can tell, will give Him such power that at last He will be able utterly to destroy evil, utterly, with its pain and suffering.

When we're good, we're buying silver bullets for the King of Heaven, and when we're bad, we're trading with the enemy.

The stage is a legitimate field for the exploitation of religious subjects, provided they are treated reverentially. Much good resulted, no doubt, from the mystery, miracle, and morality plays of the Middle Ages. Dramas of the Nativity, the Passion, and the Resurrection have been staged in modern times without offence. The time is rapidly approaching when the figure of Christ will be permitted on the English stage. Forbes-Robertson's "camouflaged" presentation of the Redeemer in "The Passing of the Third Floor Back" proved that the artistry of the modern actor is equal to the responsibility.

The *sine qua non* of such productions is, I repeat, reverential treatment. In Somerset Maugham's "The Unknown," the dramatist in that respect rose superior to reproof. He handled his subject—the effect of the great war on the Christian faith—with becoming dignity and sincerity. He adopted the attitude of the unprejudiced observer—the looker-on. He took a fact—the admitted spread of Agnosticism after the war—and he discussed it impartially. If his Agnostics awakened sympathy so did his Christians. The scales, when the curtain fell, were balanced fairly evenly.

Maugham would have brought the Church about his ears if he had tilted the scales excessively towards Agnosticism. The play, indeed, would never have been passed by the censor. As it stood, its effect may have been both good and bad. The case for Agnosticism was presented with such force that the first-night audience showed signs upstairs of contempt for Christian principles as enunciated by the parson in the piece. The sensational question, "Who is going to forgive God?" spoken by a mother who had lost two sons in the war, appeared to be a direct incentive to unbelief.

It was the dramatist's duty to a Christian State to shatter that incentive by means of the ensuing action. Did he perform that duty thoroughly? I think not. I have said that he balanced the scales of conflict "fairly" evenly. His Agnostics—the bereaved mother and a soldier hero—were permitted to remain unconverted. The hero even sacrificed love to unbelief. His sweetheart would not marry him while he denied his God; and he accepted her decision.

That was an unhappy ending, and it almost ruined the play from the viewpoint of popular effect. The third of the three acts fell flat, although the preceding acts had aroused

enthusiasm. There is a notion among advanced dramatists that happy endings are inartistic. They are not necessarily so. In "The Unknown" the conversion of the hero, to the accompaniment of wedding bells, would have been conventional, but its extreme advisability should have outweighed all highbrow considerations. A happy ending would not only have satisfied the average audience; it would also have relieved the dramatist of the grave responsibility he incurred towards the Christian faith.

"The Unknown" was a play of conversation rather than action; and one of its defects was the inactivity of many of the characters during its colloquies and duologues. It suffered, too, from the miscasting of an important part—the hero's sweetheart—which should have been performed by an actress of *spirituelle* temperament and charm. It is remembered, chiefly, for the intensely emotional acting of Miss Haidee Wright as the broken-hearted mother, a performance of real distinction. Mr. Charles V. France, too, was impressive as the old soldier who feared death, but regained his Christian fortitude on the administration of the Holy Sacrament, when he saw before him "not night and a cold blackness, but a path of golden sunshine leading straight to the arms of God."

THE BOOING OF MAUGHAM.

The great dramatist, W. Somerset Maugham, dared to write a play which looked suspiciously like an apology for free love, if not, indeed, an actual tract in its favour. This astonishing work, "The Circle," was soundly booed by a portion of the audience on its production at the Haymarket Theatre.

The play, stripped of its salad-dressing of cynicism and biting irony, in the expression of which Mr. Maugham is a master, amounted to this:—

A wife eloped with a lover thirty years ago. The deserted husband's daughter-in-law now elopes with a lover (thus bringing the wheel full circle). Each elopement is treated sympathetically. There is no pity for the deserted husbands, father and son. The curtain falls on the first couple chuckling over the elopement of the second couple and the discomfiture of the two husbands.

The story spoke for itself. It put the lure of illicit love in

an attractive light. It administered no punishment to its guilty adventurers beyond the prospective penalties attendant on social ostracism.

The play, in my opinion, was unwholesome, and, in its tone, repellent ; but it is only fair to say that it had a satisfactory run in London, while in America it was described as "a smashing box-office success."

Mr. Maugham may not have intended to create exactly the effect I have described. The man who stole a wife thirty years before, said in the concluding scene :—

" Man's a gregarious animal. We are members of a herd. If we break the herd's laws we suffer—we suffer damnably."

The fact remains, however, that the dramatist did not illustrate that excellent thesis in the disposition of his characters. His law-breaking lovers departed with every indication of future happiness.

" *The Circle*," apart from its contentious issues was a witty play. Its mordant satire caused frequent bursts of laughter.

It had the advantage, on the whole, of excellent acting, although the gallery was justified in its repeated exhortations to several of the players to " Speak up ! " and " Don't mumble ! " The under-speaking that goes on in West End theatres has developed into a vice, and these public protests are prompted by auditors exasperated beyond endurance.

Miss Fay Compton in that respect sinned heavily. She gave the impression of walking through her part. Mr. Ernest Thesiger could be heard, but he was miscast ; his oddity of manner and appearance did not assimilate with the words he uttered. Mr. Allan Aynesworth gave a clever study of character as a grumpy old peer, and Miss Lottie Venne and Mr. E. Holman Clark had many enjoyable moments.

Mr. Somerset Maugham, I am afraid, needs " an ounce of civet, good apothecary, to sweeten his imagination."

BALLET NONSENSE.

" Adultery of art," a phrase in Ben Jonson's loveliest lyric, was applicable to " *Chout*," a Russian ballet at the Princes. Its futuristic creators should assimilate Longfellow's apophthegm : " In character, in manner, in style, in all things the supreme excellence is simplicity." Nobody could possibly understand " *Chout* " without a synopsis.

It was a masterpiece of obfuscation. The curtain rose on a

cubist act-drop. What could be the meaning of this ferocious daub? The sense of vision was assaulted by a hotch-potch of primary colours depicting domes, cupolas, pyramids, archways, doorways, windows, masks, symbols, hieroglyphics, mummies, inebriated letters of the alphabet, and a wooden-headed crocodile. If colours could emit noises, these would have yelled. "Seeing snakes" or suffering from spinal curvature was nothing to the ordeal of viewing those contortional imbecilities.

Eyes with dilated pupils watched the act-drop disappear. Its merciful withdrawal revealed a scheme of architecture which seemed to have been overtaken in its inception by an earthquake. In the foreground a youth sat on a house-top beside a crazy cerise chimney-pot. His dress was a patch-work of many colours. The youth leaped to the ground and engaged in the light fantastic with seven black-bearded men in brown pot-hats, hooped tunics and trousers. Seven women followed, and falling prostrate along the footlights, were severally belaboured by the men with a whip passed from hand to hand. Then they were dragged off on the men's backs, while the orchestra wailed funereally.

Howling music also accompanied the next occurrence—the seven men harrying the youth in a scenic setting composed of chaotic buildings and trees with a surprised expression. After another dose of act-drop, a posse of red-headed girls kow-towed before a man in glistening black oilskins. A bedroom incident followed. Five pillows were piled on top of each other on a four-post bedstead. The man in oilskins made amatory advances to the youth of the first scene, now attired as a woman. Then the man lowered the "woman" through a window by a sheet, and when he pulled up the sheet a property goat was attached to the end of it. Finally, all the characters hopped and jumped to the blare of brasses and the rumble of drums.

The interpretation of these cryptic happenings, according to the synopsis, was as follows: "The youth and the men were the Young and the Old Buffoons. Young Buffoon pretended to kill his wife and raise her from the dead with his whip. The Old Buffoons brought the magic whip and tried the experiment on their wives, with fatal results. Subsequent events embraced the disposal in marriage of the Old Buffoons' daughters (the red-headed girls) and Young

Buffoon's escape from the vengeance of his dupes." In a word—buffoonery.

Prokokieff's music seemed as mad as the rest of this terpsichorean tintinnabulation. Some of it was so excruciatingly discordant that I had to put my fingers in my ears.

Musical experts did the extraordinary score of "Chout" the honour of discussing it seriously. Their verdict, on the whole, was unfavourable. Just as the scenes and dresses were bereft of a guiding principle apart from a desperate attempt to be outrageous, so the music was without purpose other than a naïve attempt to be unorthodox. The composer applied to that object a mastery of technique which he could doubtless have utilised to advantage on a definitely pleasing composition.

The creators of "Chout"—artists, composers, and producers—did not commit this outrage blindfoldedly. They all have great abilities, wantonly misapplied. If the dancing in "Chout" had been superlatively good one might have felt less inclined to be censorious. It is a curious fact that the more the producers of Ballet indulge in these heterodox creations the less attention they pay to the dancing, which should be the be-all and end-all of Ballet as an art form. When the Swedish Ballet staged a similar eccentricity at the Palace the goddess Terpsichore hardly had a look in.

So it was in "Chout." The dancers became mere pantomimists, portraying in posture and gesture what they should illustrate in dancing. Miming is a fine but a separate and distinctive art. It is necessary to a large extent to the Ballet form. It should not be permitted to intrude itself on the action to the exclusion of the dance. A few more "Chouts," and the doom of Ballet would be sealed.

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If a little country like Sweden can embark on the arduous enterprise of establishing a national ballet, why does England lag behind? The Swedish Ballet at the Palace Theatre was an immature organisation, but its inception is none the less creditable to the Swedes. Probably the art of ballet is no more "in the blood" of the Swedes than in our own. Less so, perhaps; because, although we have no national school of dancing, and have produced few really great dancers there is no country which has shown a more generous appreciation of ballet in its highest forms than England.

The Swedish Ballet had so obviously to earn its laurels that I do not propose to discuss the Palace performances except to remark that in Jenny Hasselquist and Jean Borlin the troupe possesses a toe-dancer and mime of superior attainments. I am more interested in the fact that this Swedish Ballet follows in exact detail the methods of the Russian Ballet, as familiarised to us by Diaghileff.

Diaghileff's Ballet, as presented at the Alhambra and the Princes, has been the rage of London. Its significance as an art form rested on its revolutionary character. A fore-taste of Diaghileff's achievement in emancipating Ballet from the toils of classicism was given in Covent Garden Opera by Nijinski, the greatest *premier danseur* of modern times. Nijinski prepared Londoners for the newer style of dancing, in which expression and impression largely displaced mere beauty of line and curve.

Then came Diaghileff, and with him the doom of classical, or conventional, ballet. In the perfectly modern but budding Swedish Ballet, it was significant that only one number in five illustrated the older and moribund style. That was a *divertissement*, in which the *danseuses* wore the traditional white *ballon* skirts, which were originally created to produce the impression of aerial flight.

That was the costume of the Taglionis and Legnanis and Cavalizzis, who introduced our English grandfathers to the mysteries of the art of ballet. "Orfeo," at the Empire, Leicester Square, was perhaps the most famous of the series of *ballet d'action* in which those great dancers appeared. There followed, at the Empire and Alhambra, a memorable series of nineteenth-century ballets of native growth, but exploiting foreign ballerinas of whom the most recent and most popular representatives were Adeline Genée (Danish) and Lydia Kyasht (Russian).

In the middle of the Empire-Alhambra series which continued for many years English patrons of the ballet suddenly evinced a partiality for long-skirt dancing. The vogue may have been initiated by the graceful performances of Kate Vaughan at the Gaiety, and it ended in a brief popularity of the freakish serpentine dancing invented by Loie Fuller. Long skirts soon went out. No *prima ballerina* worthy of the name would look at a style which placed irksome restrictions on steps and movements evolved by years of arduous study and practice.

Thus we have arrived at the marvellous new ballet of the younger Russian school, as represented by the dancers Nijinski, Karsavina, Pavlova, and Massine, the producer Diaghileff, the ballet master Fokin, and the colourist Bakst. When, if ever, the English stage determines to evolve a national ballet, it is in the paths of those masters (and mistresses) that we must tread. The thing is just as likely of achievement in London as in Stockholm. Our proved admiration for ballet—evinced so often at Covent Garden and in Leicester Square—should hearten our pioneers when the time is ripe for experiment.

THE GHOST OF MARY ROSE.

It may prove to be Sir J. M. Barrie's masterpiece—the wonderful, beautiful play, "Mary Rose," which was produced at the Haymarket Theatre. Its effect on the audience was indescribable. It moved them in so many ways—to laughter, to tears, to a haunting sense of dread. There were moments when applause would have seemed almost sacrilegious. There were silences that could be felt.

Mary Rose was a ghost. Miss Fay Compton, in the character, appeared as sweetheart, wife, and mother to Mr. Robert Loraine, who trebled the parts of Mary Rose's fiancé, husband, and son. Incredible as it may appear, the thing was achieved in terms of the truest drama, with never a hint of a descent from sublimity. Such is the magic, the mastery, of J. M. Barrie!

The home of Mary Rose was haunted by her spirit. She walked the rooms and corridors of the dilapidated mansion, not in spectral garments, but as the young mother, scarcely out of her teens, of twenty-five years ago.

Harry, her son, a strapping Australian soldier (Mr. Loraine), sat by the fire in the stark room and was told, as in a vision, the story of his young mother who lay in the churchyard near by, but who still walked the rooms looking for her baby boy.

He saw the home as it used to be in the mid-Victorian days when his father, a hearty sailor lad, came bounding into the room to claim his bonny bride. He saw the haunted island in the Hebrides where Mary Rose eerily disappeared from mortal ken—where she melted away into the Unseen on waves of angelic song and unearthly rumbling sounds—a creepy magic

island, birdless, with glowering trees, dark rocks and boulders, blue waters, and all the colours in Nature.

He heard Mary Rose, the girl-wife with the wondering eyes, say before she departed, "The loveliest time will be when my baby is a man and takes me on his knee, instead of me taking him on mine."

He saw them searching for the lost Mary Rose year in and year out, year out and year in. He saw her when they found her at last—and brought her home—her still-grieving parents bent and grey, but Mary Rose as young and bonny as when they lost her. He saw her amazed and bereft of speech at the changed world about her, and he heard her cry of anguished longing for her absent baby boy.

Then Mary Rose's son awoke from his trance—for he declared that he had not slept, and the affrighted house-keeper had only been away ten minutes. He had not dreamed, he said.

If he had, the dream came true. The spirit of Mary Rose appeared before him, still searching for her baby boy. He took the sad little ghost on his knee. Her "loveliest time" had come. Her baby was a man, and he took her on his knee instead of her taking him on hers. The mother-hunger of Mary Rose was satisfied at last. The angelic voices sang, the unearthly thunder rumbled, the heavenly music played—and the spirit of Mary Rose passed once again, and finally, into the great Unseen which Mary Rose said to her son was "Lovely, lovely!"

As Mr. Frederick Harrison remarked in his after-curtain speech, Sir James Barrie was indeed fortunate in his interpreters. Miss Fay Compton played Mary Rose with elfin sweetness and charm—a performance most delicately *spirituelle*. Mr. Loraine's manly sincerity was equally convincing. Mr. Norman Forbes (always delightfully Barrieish), and Miss Mary Jerrold were tenderly human as the distressed parents; and Mr. Ernest Thesiger, in the island scene, gave a richly humorous portrayal of a Shavianly pawky Scot. Miss Jean Cadell and Mr. Arthur Whitby completed as choice a cast as the London stage could show, or had ever shown.

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Who but Barrie would have thought of evolving a masterpiece from the pathetically whimsical central notion of the piece, the words spoken by the girl-wife:—

"The loveliest time will be when my baby is a man and takes me on his knee, instead of me taking him on mine."

That aspiration, and its fulfilment when the sad little ghost of Mary Rose (so beautifully played by Miss Fay Compton) is taken on his knee by her grown-up soldier son, forms the kernel of the play, and it is the sweetest, tenderest flower of poetry that has sprung from Barrie's pixie brain.

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The window in Mary Rose's dilapidated, haunted home, twenty-five years after her death, was covered with a dirty cloth for a blind. Her son removed it to look for the apple tree in which he played as a boy. "There were blue curtains to the window," he said, "and I used to hide behind them and pounce out on Robinson Crusoe."

* * * * *

"I suppose," said Mary's father, "that you think we're in our second childhood?"

"Not quite," replied the mother, "I've never known any men who were quite past their first."

The same dear old lady did not like telegrams, because they broke so many hearts.

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Among the many felicities of expression was the following:—"Queer, that you who know so much can tell nothing, and that those who know nothing can tell so much."

Humour, too:—"How could an ignorant young husband understand that it was a good sign when his young wife flung the butter-dish at him?"

The gibe at the Sassenach:—"He has not much learning, but I understand that the English manage without it."

The description of the mystic isle as "A hop-skip-and-a-jump of an island."

The epitaph suggested by Mary Rose's father for his own tombstone:—"He Remained a Larky Old Fellow to the End."

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A Shavian parallel cropped up in the island scene. Mary Rose and her husband spoke French in order not to offend the ears of a listening crofter. The Scot happened to be an Aberdeen collegian, and when they were stumped for the French for "unoriginal" he unexpectedly intervened with,

"Colloquially one might say '*coquin*,' but it would be more correct to say '*un original*.'"

In "Man and Superman" there is a similar scene. The chauffeur's employer attributes a quotation to Voltaire. "That's not Voltaire, sir," said the chauffeur, as unexpectedly as Barrie's Scot, "That's Beaumarchais."

BARRIE'S WAR MESSAGE.

"Sir James Barrie's very beautiful play" was Sir Gerald du Maurier's description in his speech after the production of "A Well-Remembered Voice" at Wyndham's Theatre. The piece was all that, and more.

The author's own description of his work was "a mystery." In spite of that there was none of Sir James's characteristic elusiveness in its composition. It neither tantalised nor provoked. It told a straightforward tale straightforwardly—and it held the audience enthralled.

The Voice of the story was Du Maurier's—the actor to whom Sir Charles Hawtrey had referred, during an auctioneering interlude, as "the man who interprets Barrie better than any one else."

He certainly interpreted Barrie felicitously in this play, although he was only heard, not seen. So did Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, who listened to the Voice and was moved by it to deep emotion, relieved by the laughter that was typically Barrie's.

Sir Johnston was Mr. Don, an artist. The Voice was Mr. Don's soldier son's, speaking to him out of the silence of the Great Beyond.

There had been a spiritualistic séance in Mr. Don's studio. Mrs. Don had been trying, vainly, to communicate with her boy. Mr. Don, disbelieving, sat apart from the others. They thought he was callous, and they rated him for it. Really, his sorrow was too deep for words.

The séance over, he was left alone—to grapple with his grief. It was then that his dead boy's voice came out to him, from the other side of the Veil—quietly, caressingly, and (who but Barrie could have achieved this thing?) colloquially, humorously, laughingly, chidingly—speaking to him from the empty armchair opposite in the terms and tones of a comfortable after-dinner chat.

The wonder of that dialogue, spoken by actors of such

quality as Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson and Sir Gerald du Maurier, remains a precious memory.

"I never thought I should be killed," said the Voice. "What a little thing it is!" Then, almost in the same breath: "Has the bathroom tap been mended yet? . . . Who's the captain of the boats?" Then, soothingly—for the father's agitation was well-nigh unbearable—"Get your pipe, father! Light it!"

Somebody whom the boy knew in this life had been awarded the K.C.M.G. He was a dictatorial fellow, and the letters as applied to him (said the Voice) meant: Kindly Call Me God! The father momentarily forgot his sorrow and laughed aloud—as the Voice intended that he should.

Barrie had often written with uncanny insight of the intimacies of maternal love. Here he wrote as revealingly of a father's strong affection. "Mother's a darling," said the Voice, "but she doesn't mean things as you do."

Again the Voice grew gentle. It spoke of another loved one—of the golden girl. "I kissed her under the lilac tree," it said. Afterwards, in a later scene, the girl herself exclaimed in a moment of rapturous remembrance, "I seem to scent the lilac—he kissed me under the lilac tree."

"Keep bright, father," said the Voice at parting. "I shall get a good mark for it. Remember, father, it's not good-bye."

So the curtain fell on this poem of a play—the father relighting his pipe, gripping it in his teeth, and resolving to "keep bright."

It is remarkable that such a play should have been limited to a fugitive matinée performance. Every father bereaved by the war should have seen it, and, like Mr. Don, have been encouraged thereby to "keep bright." That was Barrie's war message to his fellow-countrymen.

THE WOMAN WHO SCREAMED.

Tantalising Barrie! Pixieish, provoking Barrie!

The first act of his new unfinished play, "Shall We Join the Ladies?" left the audience baffled and bewildered. The King and Queen, who witnessed its second representation at the Palace Theatre, were probably as bemused as the rest of us as we departed wondering, wondering.

The setting of the play recalled the famous round dinner

table of "The Man from Blankley's," while the atmosphere at times had something of the tensity of "The 13th Chair."

There were thirteen people at the table, represented by famous actors and actresses. They comprised, at the first performance before the Prince of Wales at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, Mr. Dion Boucicault (the host), Miss Fay Compton, Sir Charles Hawtrey, Miss Sybil Thorndike, Mr. Cyril Maude, Lady Tree, Mr. Leon Quartermaine, Miss Lillah McCarthy, Mr. Nelson Keys, Miss Madge Titheradge, Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, Miss Irene Vanbrugh, and Miss Marie Löhr. The remaining members of the cast were Mr. Norman Forbes (a policeman), Miss Hilda Trevelyan (a maid), and Sir Gerald du Maurier (a butler).

A guest described Sam Smith, the host, as a pocket Pickwick. He sprang a dramatic surprise on the diners in the midst of the conviviality. Whether Mr. Smith was serious or indulging in hanky-panky, only the full-length play will reveal.

Two years ago, he said, his brother was murdered at Monte Carlo by means of a cup of poisoned coffee. The poison was administered by a person sitting at the table.

Consternation, alarm, agitation, incredulity—almost every form and degree of emotion found expression in the faces of Sam Smith's guests. Some of the agitation was comic—especially Sir Charles Hawtrey's as a bibulous old bore. The audience would be alternately roaring with laughter and holding its breath.

A policeman appeared when a few of the guests showed a disposition to leave the room. The butler, as saturnine as Du Maurier could make him, hovered darkly around. After the matter had been thoroughly discussed (and Lady Tree had fainted), the ladies retired. The men, before they joined them, went through another period of serio-comic suspense. A piercing scream was heard. The men rushed out of the room. Sam Smith, alone at the table, chuckled over a glass of wine as the curtain fell.

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The scream was delivered "off." Who was the woman who screamed? Was it the character played by Miss Fay Compton, or Miss Sybil Thorndike, or Lady Tree, or Miss Lillah McCarthy, or Miss Madge Titheradge, or Miss Irene

Vanbrugh, or Miss Gladys Cooper, or Miss Hilda Trevelyan ? At the second performance, at the Palace Theatre, I rather suspected Miss Lillah McCarthy.

Sam Smith had indirectly incriminated each of the twelve guests.

“ Which of you,” he interjected suddenly, “ has a hand that has gone clammy cold ? ”

The clammy hand was apparently Miss McCarthy’s. She withdrew it furtively from the table. Miss Hilda Trevelyan, the maid, detected the movement, and gasped.

The ladies retired—not to the drawing-room, as in the original production at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, but to the butler’s room “ at the end of a long, dark passage.” How curious ! Could the butler (Sir Gerald du Maurier) explain that peculiar choice of rendezvous ?

Why did the woman scream at the end of the long, dark passage ?

For that matter, why did each of the actresses named, when individually addressed by Mr. Smith, exhibit some sign of discomfiture ?

Indeed, every moment in this palpitating compound of whimsicality and thrill was punctuated with an interrogative, and the answer to it all may be—SPOOF.

I am beginning to doubt whether Sam Smith’s brother was really murdered at all. That would be a commonplace occurrence, and Barrie is nothing if not unusual. The clue to the play’s motive may lie, perhaps, in Sam Smith’s cryptic observation, “ Each one of us has some secret within us that would be staggering if revealed to the rest.” It will be discovered, perhaps, that every one of the guests was a murderer ! One thing may be taken for granted—the laugh will be with Barrie, that elfin, inscrutable joker with the masterpieces up his sleeve.

RING DOWN THE CURTAIN.

The year 1921 will be remembered in the London theatres for its unprecedented series of box-office slumps and unparalleled succession of failures. It was also characterised by a recrudescence of booing, the conclusion of the longest run on record (“ Chu Chin Chow ”), the advent of a brilliant new dramatist (Miss Clemence Dane), the run of two plays right

through the year ("Paddy the Next Best Thing" and "The Beggar's Opera"), and the death of the great comedian, Sir John Hare.

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John Hare, one of the last of the eminent actors of the Victorian era, died in December at the age of seventy-seven—a victim of influenza. His stage career covered a period of fifty-three years, from his débüt in Liverpool in 1864 to his last performance, at the age of seventy-three, in "A Pair of Spectacles" at Wyndham's Theatre in 1917.

He ranged from Robertson to Barrie—from "Caste" to "Little Mary." He helped to found the Bancroft's fortunes in the Robertsonian teacup-and-saucer comedies at the old Prince of Wales' Theatre. His association with the Kendals at the St. James' Theatre formed a famous management, lasting nearly ten years, and memorable for the introduction of a great new dramatist—Sir Arthur Pinero.

The Garrick Theatre was built for John Hare by Sir W. S. Gilbert. He opened it in 1889 with Pinero's sex drama, "The Profligate," and he produced there such celebrated plays as Sydney Grundy's "A Pair of Spectacles" and Pinero's "Notorious Mrs. Ebbesmith" and "Gay Lord Quex." Other notable modern plays with which his name is associated as producer are "Olivia," "Still Waters Run Deep," "A Scrap of Paper," and "The Ironmaster."

John Hare, in the zenith of his powers, was Royalty's favourite actor. He was often "commanded" by King Edward to Windsor, Sandringham, and Balmoral.

It may be doubted whether the English stage has known, in modern times, a finer character comedian. His dapper personality in the many sunny roles he played exuded amiability. He had a crisp, staccato manner and a wealth of thrustful gesture which enabled him to drive his points home with an incomparable air of spontaneity.

He was unrivalled in his time as a delineator of old men parts. What a gallery of living portraits he assembled! Eccles, with his white, bushy eyebrows and drooping whiskers; irascible Lord Kilclare in "A Quiet Rubber"; the dude with a curl in "School" (Beau Farintosh); Dickensian Baron Croodle in "The Money-Spinner"; and, above all, dear old Benjamin Goldfinch, beaming reprovingly through his spectacles at the hard-fisted "mon fra' Sheffield."

His gift for make-up has never been excelled, and only approached, perhaps, by Mr. Cyril Maude.

When John Hare was on the stage you had no eyes for any other performer. You would be laughing one minute and crying the next. That was John Hare all over.

* * * * *

The King's visits to London theatres in 1921 showed a diminution from those of 1920 and 1919. His attendances numbered only nine, as compared with seventeen in 1920 and eighteen in 1919.

In this respect the King was no more remiss than the majority of his subjects. The times were out of joint in 1921, and the people's disinclination for expensive amusements was reflected in the Royal Family's comparative abstention from theatre-going.

It may not be generally known that the King always pays for his boxes at the theatre. He also bears the brunt of the costly command performances at Windsor and Sandringham—which, by the way, have not been given for several years. On rare occasions the King may ring up his booking agent, Mr. Ashton, and order a box at a theatre which happens to be "packed out." The order, rather than disturb the occupants of the boxes, is then transferred to another night, or cancelled.

* * * * *

"Rise, Sir Sock de Buskin ! Rise, Sir Doublet de Hose ! Varlet, bring hither the Most Noble Order of the Garter for the Marquis of Crummles ! "

The year ended with the announcement of two more stage knighthoods. If the accolade continues to be bestowed at the present rate of progress the theatrical profession will soon require a "Debrett" of its very own.

Several newspapers, after the knighting of Mr. Charles Hawtrey and Mr. Gerald du Maurier, attempted to enumerate the whole of our titled Thespians. The task was beyond them. Every chronicler overlooked a few. Sir Frank Benson, despite his signal services to the Shakespearean theatre, was a notable omission in a morning newspaper's list. All the recorders, without exception, forgot Sir Guy Standing, the young Criterion actor who forsook the stage for the Navy.

This must not be. Let us place on record for posterity's abashment all the present-day titled folk associated with the British stage. We will incorporate them in the form of an imaginary performance of

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL.

Sir Peter Teazle (Sir Squire Bancroft) ; Sir Oliver Surface (Lord Lyveden) ; Sir Harry Bumper (Sir Harry Lauder) ; Sir Benjamin Backbite (Sir Frank Benson) ; Joseph Surface (Sir Guy Standing) ; Charles Surface (Sir Gerald du Maurier) ; Careless (Sir J. Martin-Harvey) ; Rowley (Sir Arthur Pinero) ; Moses (Sir Charles Hawtrey) ; Snake (Sir Alfred Butt) ; Crabtree (Sir Walter de Frece) ; Sir Toby (Sir J. Forbes-Robertson) ; Trip (Sir Oswald Stoll) ; Servant to Joseph (Earl Cowley) ; Servant to Charles (Sir J. M. Barrie) ; Servant to Lady Sneerwell (Lord Dunsany) ; Servant to Sir Peter (Sir Walter Gibbons) ; Lady Teazle (Lady Forbes-Robertson) ; Mrs. Candour (Lady Tree) ; Lady Sneerwell (Lady Wyndham) ; Maria (Hon. Alice de Grey) ; Maid to Lady Teazle (Lady Martin-Harvey) ; Maid to Lady Sneerwell (Lady de Frece).

Lady Sneerwell's Guests.

Lady Hawtrey, Lady du Maurier, Lady Lauder, Lady Benson, Lady Butt, Lady Robert Innes-Ker, Lady Chetwynd, the Hon. Mrs. Maurice Brett, Lady Alexander, Lady Churston, Lady George Cholmondeley, Lady de Bathe, Lady Headfort, Lady Queensberry, Lady Hare, Lady Irving, Lady Maxwell-Willshire, Lady Constance Malleson, Lord Lathom, Lady Victor Paget, Lady Ashburton, Lady St. Oswald, Lady Poulett, Marquis of Hertford, Lady William Maxwell, Dame Webster, Dame Genevieve Ward, Lady Guggisberg, Viscount Glerawly, Lady Dorothy D'Oyly Carte, the Duke and Duchess of Leinster.

I sincerely hope that the notion will not be adopted, even for the charity that notoriously covers a multitude of sins. I would hate to be the cause of poor old Sheridan turning in his grave.

There is still room in the theatrical profession for a few more knighthoods. Meanwhile, we have to be going on with, plain Ellen Terry. No need for a handle here. Ellen Terry could say, with Malvolio, "Every one of these letters is in my name."

Unquestioned successes at the London theatres in 1921 were greatly outnumbered by the failures. The majority of the following new London plays in that disastrous year lasted only a few days or weeks, and it is doubtful whether any of them repaid the cost of production:—

Lonely Lady ; Hanky Panky John ; The Wonderful Visit ; The Hour and the Man ; A Social Convenience ; Fulfilling the Law ; Love !? ; The Ninth Earl ; Nightie Night ; Don Q ; Heart of a Child ; Up in Mabel's Room ; Faust-on-Toast ; A Matter of Fact ; Love Among the Paint Pots ; Mary ; Sweet William ; "Some" Detective ; The British Ballet ; Pilgrim of Eternity ; Fantasia ; Heartbreak House ; Count X ; The Tartan Peril ; The First and the Last ; A Family Man ; Mr. Malatesta ; James the Less ; M'Lady ; The Cinema Lady ; By all Means, Darling ; After Dinner ; Threads ; The Trump Card ; The Love Thief ; Now and Then ; Crooked Usage ; Timothy ; The Hotel Mouse ; Araminta Arrives ; Deburau ; The Painted Laugh ; Two Jacks and a Jill ; The Pedlar's Basket ; The Legion of Honour.

One or two of the above pieces deserved a better fate, but the list, on the whole, constitutes a damning indictment of managerial inability to "sense" good plays. No wonder the galleries erupted execrations ! As Dr. Johnson would have said, "Sir, there was a habit of sibilation in the house."

Miss Clemence Dane was the dramatist of the year. Her "Bill of Divorcement" had literary and constructional qualities exceptional in a first play, while in "Will Shakespeare," despite its impolitic treatment of the national poet, Miss Dane sustained the promise of her initial effort. Other successful new dramatists were the American, Eugene O'Neill ("In the Zone" and "Diff'rent") and Mr. A. L. Burke ("Thank you, Phillips"). Gratifying, too, were the triumphs of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, the Russian Ballet, the Co-Optimists, and the artistry exhibited in the productions at the Grand Guignol.

Playwriting achievements of 1921 further comprised Sir J. M. Barrie's fascinating first act of "Shall We Join The Ladies ?" Lord Dunsany's enjoyable fantasy, "If"; Somerset Maugham's witty but disturbing comedy, "The Circle"; Mr. Monckton Hoffe's charming and cunningly constructed

"Faithful Heart"; and Mr. A. A. Milne's felicitously written "Truth About Blayds."

Famous dramatists who missed the mark were John Galsworthy ("The First and the Last" and "A Family Man"), H. G. Wells ("The Wonderful Visit"), H. A. Vachell ("The Hour and the Man" and "Count X"), and Bernard Shaw ("Heartbreak House"). In Mr. Shaw's case, however, it is only fair to add that his tantalising comedy was popular in New York, where the Drama League and many leading critics included it among the ten best plays of the year.

The actor of 1921 was Mr. Godfrey Tearle. His powerful embodiment of the recusant monk in "The Garden of Allah" was followed by an Othello worthy to rank with the ablest modern expositions of the role—an Othello which suggested that a great new English tragedian may have "arrived." Mr. Tearle afterwards gave a strong display of melodramatic acting in "The Sign on the Door," and finally, a subtly blended performance, delicately compounded of virility and tenderness, in "The Faithful Heart." Those diversified creations of Godfrey Tearle composed the histrionic gesture of the year.

We were thrilled and delighted in 1921 by a number of memorable performances besides Mr. Tearle's. They included the Orestes of De Max, the Daniel of Bernhardt, Du Maurier's Bulldog Drummond, Malcolm Keen's tragic husband in "A Bill of Divorcement," Sybil Thorndike's distraught Evadne in "The Maid's Tragedy," Mr. McKinnel's fine study of senility as Oliver Blayds, Mr. Ainley's Prospero, Hawtrey's Pirate Applejack, Haidee Wright's Queen Elizabeth, Robert Loraine's Debureau, Esme Beringer's Lady Macbeth, Matheson Lang's bullfighter in "Blood and Sand," Wilette Kershaw's emotional mistress in "Woman to Woman," and Nikita Balieff's inimitable diversions with the Chauve-Souris.

Not at all a fruitless year for Mr. Thespis!

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